2 Days to go
amazon prime day
4 - 6 July

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

INCLUDES 4 PAGES OF BANGALORE TIMES

INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

2 Days to go
amazon prime day
4 - 6 July

TVK and DMK accuse each other of trying to poach their MLAs. TN cops **arrest 3 men, detain 4 others on charges of trying to buy over 15 MLAs from CM Vijay's party** to vote against assembly speaker in a planned no-trust motion

Centre issues eviction notice to Delhi Gymkhana saying it's in 'unauthorised occupation of public premises' since **land lease ended on May 22.** Club told to submit response by July 7

FLIPPED IT by THE TIMES OF INDIA

A 60-SECOND DAILY WORD CHALLENGE. Crack the word, build your streak, share your score. Top scorers get featured in TOI

CM **Satheesan-led Kerala govt says Adani Group cannot proceed with any change in ownership of Vizhinjam International Seaport project** without the state's prior approval and it has not received any proposal seeking such a permission

EPF contributions above ₹1,800/mth to be voluntary

Shiva.Rajora @timesofindia.com

New Delhi: In an overhaul of provident fund rules for nearly eight crore active members, Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has said 12% contribution up to the statutory wage ceiling, which is currently at Rs 15,000 a month, is mandatory. Any contribution above that will be treated as voluntary.

Even if your basic salary is Rs 1 lakh a month, Rs 1,800 will be deducted towards your PF contribution — along with a matching contribution by the employer. But you will also have the option to park the remaining amount towards retirement savings.

"An employee may opt to contribute, on a voluntary basis, an additional contribution on wages exceeding the statutory wage ceiling at statutory rate or at any rate in excess of statutory rate," according to provisions of the Employees' Provident Funds Scheme, 2026 (EPF 2026) notified Wednesday.

Employers have the option — not an obligation — to match these additional voluntary contributions, and both the employees and employers can reduce or discontinue such additional voluntary contributions at any time.

"The flexibility introduced in the scheme is to provide greater autonomy to the contributing members for their retirement savings. These provisions have been discussed extensively in the central board of trustee meetings and have been made with their concurrence and align with the objectives of the new labour codes," an official told **TOI**.

Given that most private sector employees and employers have a cost-to-company relationship, salaries may be restructured, allowing both sides to work out an arrangement that is beneficial to the EPFO subscriber.

RESTRUCTURE SALARY TO SAVE MORE

- Mandatory contributions by both employees and employers now **capped at 12% of ₹15,000**
- Employees can restructure their salaries and save above the mandatory ₹15k limit by contributing more
- Withdrawal **categories streamlined from 13 to 3** — essential needs (illness, education, marriage), housing needs & special circumstances
- **Number of withdrawals** allowed also **increased**
- All employers to file a **consolidated return within 15 days** giving details of all employees including their Aadhaar, PAN, UAN, gross wages and EPF wages

▶ **Withdrawal changes, P10**

4 yrs on, K'taka health dept plans to revive bike ambulances

Bengaluru: Karnataka health dept is planning to restart bike ambulances across the state with an initial fleet of 100 vehicles to ensure early assistance in medical emergencies, **reports Jahnavi**.

The bike-ambulance service ran from 2015 to 2022, benefiting more than 10,000 patients under the state's platinum-window trauma care programme launched during health minister UT Khader's previous tenure.

The govt discontinued the service due to shortage of manpower and bikes.

The ambulance-on-two-wheelers service is expected to rush aid — with a response time of roughly 10 minutes — in a city like Bengaluru where ambulances inch through gridlocked traffic.

▶ **100 vehicles, P 3**

CBI arrests IPS officer in ₹3cr bribery case

CBI on Wednesday arrested 2012-batch IPS officer Rahul Gahlawat in a Rs 3-cr bribery case involving a Puducherry-based businessman, a rare move against a senior police officer in a corruption case that has already ensnared six people, including a Delhi Police inspector. Gahlawat, of Haryana cadre, is on deputation in the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security and was questioned earlier in the case. TNN

Tusker trapped in railway fence freed after 5 hrs

A wild tusker was trapped for hours in a narrow gap of a railway fence near Arekoppa village in Kanakapura taluk. The tusker had ventured out of Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary in search of food in the nearby agricultural fields. The elephant got stuck while trying to squeeze through an opening meant for cattle, prompting a major five-hour rescue operation by forest officials. **P 4**

Techie's BF killed parents, sis: Cops

Investigations into Bengaluru's triple murder suggest that techie Shwetha's BF, J Kenneth, executed the killings while she watched. Police said Shwetha took loans amounting to Rs 56 lakh to fund Kenneth's lavish lifestyle. **P 3**

Three killed in wall collapse in M'luru

Three persons, including two kids, were killed when a wall collapsed on a row of four houses following a landslip triggered by heavy rain in Mangaluru Wednesday. The area has been receiving rain since Tuesday night. **P 5**

ATF, commercial LPG prices cut as global crude cost eases

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: State-run oil marketing companies Wednesday cut the price of commercial LPG cylinders by Rs 183.5 and aviation turbine fuel (ATF) by Rs 5 per litre, as global crude prices eased from the highs seen during the peak of the West Asia conflict and supply concerns abated with reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Private fuel retailer Nayara Energy also rolled back the price increases it had introduced during the conflict, reducing petrol prices by Rs 5 per litre and diesel by Rs 3 per litre across its 7,000-odd retail outlets. However, there has been no change in prices of 14.2-kg domestic LPG cylinder, which costs Rs 942 in the Capital, CNG (Rs 83.09 per kg), or petrol (Rs 102.12 per litre) and diesel (Rs 95.2 per litre) sold by state-run Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum.

1ST CUT SINCE DEC

- **Price of a 19kg commercial LPG cylinder has been cut by ₹183.5 to ₹2,930 in Delhi.** Such a cylinder now costs ₹2,884 in Mumbai, ₹3,099.5 in Chennai and **₹3,021 in Bengaluru**
- First cut in commercial LPG prices since last Dec
- ATF for domestic airlines now costs ₹110 per litre. **Industry insiders say 'minor' cut in ATF prices is unlikely to lead to lower air fares**

▶ **Price cut in Delhi, P 9**

Report: Iran, Oman advance plans for Hormuz transit fees

Plans to introduce payments for vessels transiting the strategic Strait of Hormuz are being advanced by Iran and Oman despite public objections from Washington, according to a report published by NYT.

The implementation of the proposal would represent a major shift from the pre-war status of the critical waterway, where merchant ships had historically transited free of charge between the two coastal nations while ferrying oil and gas supplies from the Persian Gulf to international markets. **P 14**

Centre asks WhatsApp to pause username rollout, seeks report within 3 days

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Govt has directed Meta-owned WhatsApp not to roll out its proposed usernames feature in India until further consultations are completed, while asking the company to submit a detailed explanation within three days on how the system will operate and prevent misuse.

In a notice issued to WhatsApp's chief compliance officer, the ministry of electronics and information technology (MeITY) said it had taken note of the company's announcement that users would soon be able to reserve unique usernames, and eventually, start conversations without sharing their mobile-phone numbers.

Once activated, the feature would allow first-time contact through usernames alone, and users would also have the option of protecting their account with a "username key".

While acknowledging the privacy benefits, the notice said the change could "materially increase" incidents of online fraud, phishing, digital arrest scams and impersonation by making it easier for malicious actors to contact unsuspecting users.

FEARS OF FRAUD

- Govt notice seeks explanation from Meta, says new feature may boost **fraud, phishing, impersonation scams**
- WhatsApp directed to submit **response in 3 days**
- WA says it has built **multiple safeguards**

▶ **Detailed explanation, P 9**

TN govt moves SC against HC order banning cow slaughter

New Delhi: Tamil Nadu govt has moved Supreme Court against Madras HC order imposing a blanket ban on the slaughter of cows and calves in the state.

In its plea, the state govt challenged the May 27 order of HC, which directed the chief secretary and the director general of police/head of police force to ensure that no cow or calf got slaughtered across the state either on the eve of Bakrid on May 28, or on any other day.

"In a writ petition seeking a direction to 'prevent the slaughter of cows in public places', the HC ought to have travelled beyond the issue involved, to impose an absolute and blanket ban...," the govt's appeal said. The HC order was based on a 1976 ruling. AGENCIES

▶ **HC order in May, P 10**

US lifts curbs on Anthropic's Claude models

San Francisco: The Trump administration lifted restrictions on artificial intelligence company Anthropic's latest versions of its Claude chatbot, ending a weeks-long ban tied to cybersecurity concerns.

Anthropic said Tuesday night that its AI model called Claude Fable 5 is now widely available. It is also restoring access to its most powerful model, Mythos 5, but only to a select group of US-based organisations approved by the federal govt.

The commerce department blocked foreign nationals from using both AI models on June 12, a move San Francisco-based Anthropic said forced it to immediately take the products down for all users just days after it unveiled them. AGENCIES

Scientists build from scratch cells that can grow, feed & reproduce

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Marking a breakthrough in biological engineering, researchers claim to have created the world's first synthetic cells that can feed, grow and replicate like a natural cell, taking a big step towards the holy grail of making a living organism out of non-living components.

Developed by University of Minnesota scientists under a project called SpudCell, the work could in time lead to made-to-order living machines.

"We've replicated in chemistry what only used to be possible in biology: the complete set of behaviours of a cell. It proves that fundamental functions of life, like growth and replication, don't need a mysterious magical spark," said Kate Adamala, who led the effort, in a note released by the varsity.

The SpudCell isn't quite 'alive'. It can't survive without deliveries of food and ribosomes, the molecular machines needed to make proteins. It also has no defences or a good waste removal system.

But experts said it's the most compelling demonstration yet that it is possible to generate life from non-life.

"This work is just the beginning. We are showing it's possible to engineer the basic functions of the cell. To fully realise the promise of this technology — to make it robust and practical — we need combined international effort," Adamala said.

SpudCell is a pared down version of a living cell. While natural cells divide using internal scaffolding called a cytoskeleton, the synthetic cell sidesteps the need for a cytoskeleton with proteins that crowd together on the membrane surface until the mechanical stress makes the membrane split.

WHAT IS SPUDCELL?

- It's a **pared down version of living cell** that has its own mechanism of cell division
- Cells demonstrate **traits of selection and competition**, have a **tiny genome** split across 7 DNA plasmids
- Experts say SpudCell most compelling demonstration yet that it is **possible to generate life from non-life**

▶ **Cells grew faster, P 6**

AWL Agri business

FAMILY JUST GREW A LITTLE SWEETER.

We're proud to add Madhur Sugar to the AWL portfolio, joining a family of brands that nourishes every 1 in 3 Indian households*. Together, we continue our commitment to bringing trusted food products to millions of kitchens.

*As per Kantar IMRB (Worldpanel by Numerator) Data Mar'26

135 Million+ Households
2.6 Million Retail Outlets
10,000+ Distribution Partners
80+ Manufacturing Units

fortune edible oils and foods · Kohinoor · KING'S EDIBLE OILS & FOODS · Tops · madhur Pure & Hygienic Sugar · CHARMINAR · TROPHY ROYALE · Raag · Aadhar · alife · BULLET · Fryola · fortune Sufe-shan

Bangalore Times

Hardik Pandya's shift highlights Bengaluru as India's coolest sporting hub

A role can't change you, but it teaches you a lot, says Manoj

Buzzstop

OUT & PROUD

Aaj khush toh bahut hoge Dubai

Dressed to ace

KBG Urges Traders, Vendors To Voluntarily Clear Encroachments, Make It People's Movement

This one's for you, pedestrians GBA CLEANS UP FOOTPATHS

Sanjay R Murty & Hamsaveni N | TNN

Bengaluru: Earthmovers, backhoes and jackhammers tore into illegal constructions on footpaths Wednesday morning as Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) launched its latest campaign to clear city roads of encroachments. Street vendors were asked to move into inner lanes, and parked vehicles, shop extensions and other obstructions were tossed out of prime footpaths meant for pedestrians.

Bengaluru development minister Krishna Byre Gowda Wednesday said the city's 'Safe Footpaths Campaign' should become "a people's movement" to reclaim public spaces for pedestrians. He urged traders, commercial establishments and street vendors to voluntarily clear encroachments. On day one, GBA freed up 76km of city footpaths and handed them back to pedestrians.

The GBA campaign comes amid **TOI**'s ongoing Walk-o-Meter series, which assesses footpaths across the city for walkability, safety and accessibility. The series has found several stretches encroached upon by vendors, vehicles and shop awnings, forcing pedestrians onto carriageways.

At the same time, the minister reaffirmed the state govt's commitment to protecting the livelihoods of street vendors. "Except on around 20% of priority arterial roads, vending can continue on other roads, provided pedestrian movement is not obstructed," he said. "Every resident of Bengaluru has the right to use safe and obstruction-free footpaths. This should not remain merely a govt campaign; it must become a people's movement driven by public participation," he said.

Across five city corporations, GBA scrubbed some of the key roads which were a nightmare for both pedestrians and motorists. These roads include MG Road, Old Madras Road, Indiranagar's 100ft Road, Mysore Road, Kempegowda Road, Cunningham Road, Hope Farm Junction-Varthur Kodi, Marathahalli Junction-Iblur Junction, ITPL Main Road, Sampige Road in Malleswaram, Katriguppe Main Road, Bull Temple Road, Sahakaranagar Railway Parallel Road in Byatarayanapura, Vidyaranyapura Main Road, Banaswadi Main Road in Sarvagnanagar, key roads in Jayanagar, Bommanahalli, Padmanabhanagar, JP Nagar and BTM Layout.

Malleswaram alone accounted for 11km of freed-up roads.

Pics: TOI

RECLAIMING SPACE: On day one of the drive, GBA freed up 76km of city footpaths and handed them back to pedestrians as part of the Safe Footpaths Campaign

Walk-o-meter

Petty shops, pushcarts, construction debris, illegal cables, temporary building projections and other encroachments were cleared with support from police and other govt departments. In some locations in many civic zones of Bengaluru, stormwater drain slabs were installed to improve drainage after encroachments were removed. Hotel extensions, vegetable stalls, illegal concrete structures, compound walls and other obstacles blocking pedestrian movement were demolished in the campaign, which will continue in the coming days.

Bengaluru North City Corporation removed encroachments from six assembly constituencies, covering Byatarayanapura, Vidyaranyapura, Sarvagnanagar, Pulikeshinagar, Hebbal and Yelahanka. Civic teams removed street vendors, pushcarts, unauthorised advertisement boards, sheds and other encroachments.

Norwegian envoy explores B'luru by running on streets

Sanjay.Murty@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: Norway's Ambassador to India, May-Elin Stener, and a high-level Norwegian delegation Wednesday participated in a 6.5km run through Bengaluru's streets and footpaths.

The run, led by Arun Pai of Project Walkaluru, aimed to showcase Bengaluru through its walkable streets and to demonstrate the importance of continuous, obstruction-free footpaths.

The delegation began the run at 7.45am from Trinity Circle and ran through Ulsoor lake-front, St John's Road, Commercial Street, Shivajinagar, Cubbon Park, before ending it at Vidhana Soudha at 9am. The route was chosen to highlight a continuous stretch of usable footpaths while also offering visitors a glimpse of the city's heritage and neighbourhoods.

Ambassador May-Elin Stener said she enjoyed the experience and appreciated Bengaluru's pleasant weather. "This is the third time I am running in Bengaluru and I have really enjoyed it every time. Particularly with the heat of Delhi now, it is so nice to run in this temperature," she said.

Sharing her feedback on the city's pedestrian infrastructure, Stener said, "It feels safe, but work still needs to be done in some places."

Pai said, "The delegation loved it. We had covered the same stretch during the Rajyotsava walk last year. It's a good thing that the stretch has been maintained well. This demonstrates that it is possible to have continuous stretches without encroachments or obstacles."

Pai said the group also ran along the newly developed jogging track at Ulsoor Lake. He added the organisers deliberately avoided Bengaluru's popular running routes. "Normally, people run on Cubbon Road and other well-maintained roads. We deliberately skipped those and chose inner stretches instead. This also gave the delegation a cultural experience, passing temples and mosques along the way," he said.

Pai said Bengaluru Central City Corporation extended full support for the initiative and described it as the first time a senior international delegation visiting India had undertaken a sightseeing run on city footpaths.

The delegation included Bård Vegar Solhjell, chief executive officer and former Norwegian minister of environment; Jens Frølich Holte, director of Energy Systems and Analysis and ex-Norwegian deputy minister of foreign affairs; and Sindre Sættem, strategic adviser to the CEO.

TOI

GET, SET, GO! Norway's Ambassador to India, May-Elin Stener, participated in a 6.5km run, organised by Project Walkaluru, Wednesday

Women-only driving school in Bidadi soon

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Karnataka will soon have an exclusive driving training institute for women at Bidadi industrial area on the outskirts of Bengaluru.

BMTC will develop the facility, which will include a driving track, training buildings and other supporting infrastructure. Reviewing the transport department's ongoing projects, minister Byrathi Suresh said the centre will train women to obtain driving licences across all vehicle categories, from two-wheelers to heavy vehicles. He added the initiative is aimed at promoting women's economic self-reliance.

The institute will be set up as a joint initiative of central and state govts. Karnataka-based women's organisation AWAKE (Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Karnataka) will provide skill-based training, including driving and other vocational programmes.

Officials said the training institute will be developed on five acres of land and will include both residential and non-residential training facilities for women once operational.

Transport Bhavan to get own building?

Considering that the transport commissioner's office is currently functioning from a rented building in Shantinagar, the department is exploring the possibility of constructing its own dedicated building.

The minister suggested examining the feasibility of building a 'Saarige Bhavan' on about one acre of KSRTC-owned land in Shantinagar. He directed officials to prepare a proposal for construction using departmental resources.

Snake rescuer Anees no more

Bengaluru: The city lost one of its best-known snake rescuers Tuesday evening. **Mohammed Anees**, whose name became synonymous with wildlife rescue and conservation efforts over the past four decades, succumbed to complications arising from pneumonia. The 55-year-old is survived by his wife, son and daughter.

Anees studied at St Germain High School, where he was known as a talented sportsperson. However, his lifelong passion for wildlife — particularly snakes and other reptiles — defined his legacy. From rescuing his first snake in 1987, at the age of 17, to participating in crocodile-rescue operations until a few years ago, Anees went on to become one of Karnataka's most-respected and pioneering wildlife rescuers.

Anees rescued thousands of venomous and non-venomous snakes, relocating them safely to suitable habitats around Bannerghatta National Park. His expertise took him to Chennai Snake Park, where he worked briefly with herpetologist Romulus Whitaker, gaining valuable scientific knowledge and refining his approach to snake rescue and conservation.

His scientific outlook and unwavering commitment to conservation inspired a generation of wildlife rescuers across Karnataka, earning him the affectionate nickname, Snake Anees. TNN

Speeding trucks kill two in city

Bengaluru: A food-delivery agent and a private company employee died in two truck accidents in the city since Tuesday night.

Food-delivery agent L Kunvar, 48, of Singasandra, died when a truck knocked him down in Varthur around 1.30am Wednesday. Kunvar was riding back home after delivering goods to customers. In the second accident around 2am Wednesday, 25-year-old private firm employee Kelvin succumbed to injuries after a truck rear-ended his bike near Kalyan Nagar main road. TNN

Videos show nannies threatening toddlers of 2-3 years for crying

▶ Continued from page 1

A senior police officer further said they would issue notices to the five women, directing them to appear for questioning.

Cops said the videos purportedly show the nannies threatening toddlers aged 2-3 years when they cried or created disturbance. The toddlers are the children of techies. The cops Wednesday inspected the premises and collected CCTV footage from the centre.

"Also, we will ask the parents or guardians of the toddlers whether they noticed any such unnatural activities in the centre or whether their children complained of ill-treatment," he said.

While you enjoy FIFA game night, do not miss to hit your sleep goal: Docs

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Bengaluru: As FIFA World Cup 2026 moves towards the pre-quarters stage and excitement builds, football fans across the city are settling in for late-night screenings, ordering food at odd hours and relying on caffeine to stay awake through the action.

While the city's vibrant nightlife and round-the-clock delivery services make it easier than ever to follow every soccer match, doctors caution that weeks of disrupted sleep, alcohol consumption and midnight binge eating can take a toll on physical and mental health.

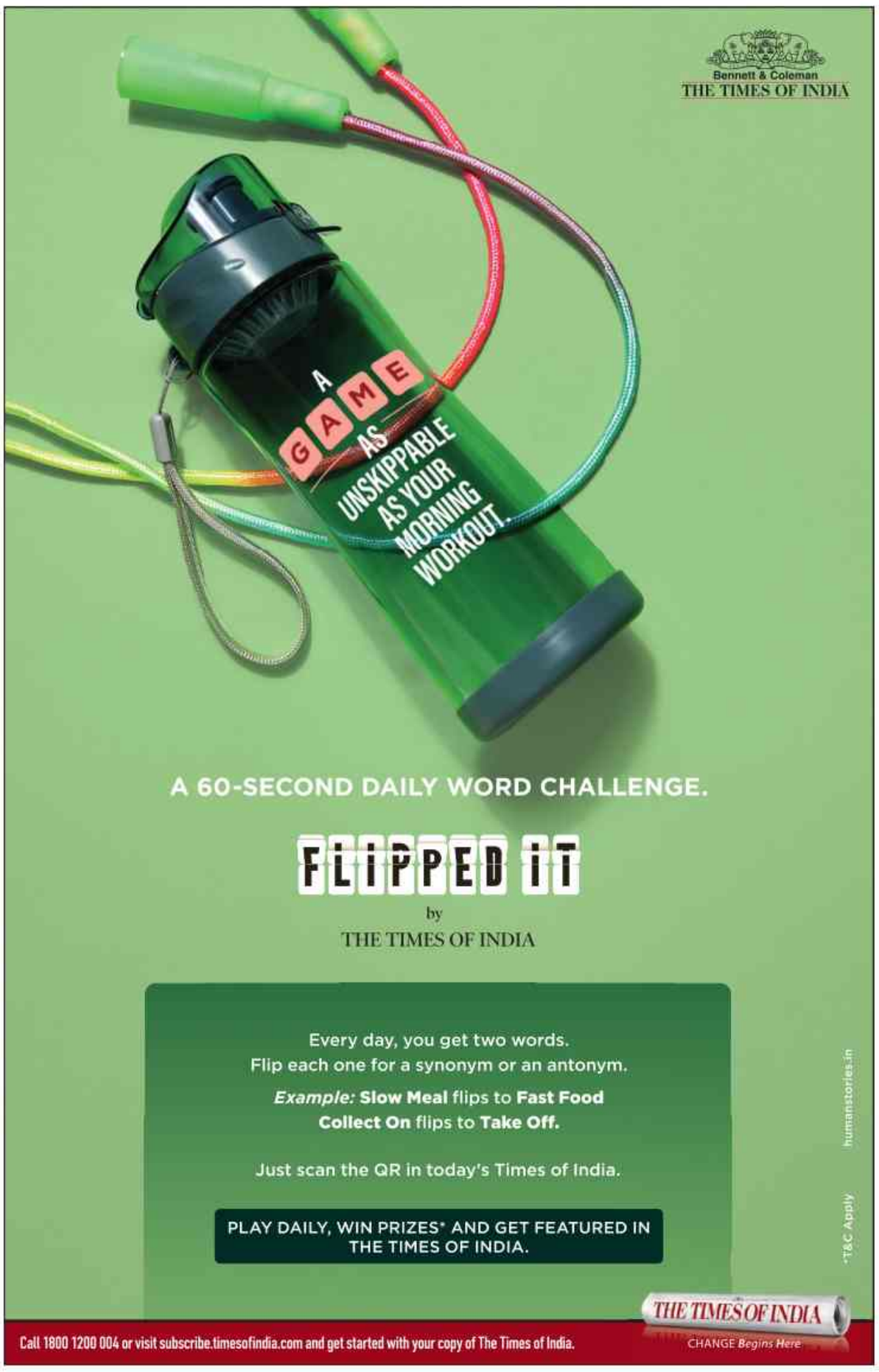
"Things like the possibility of ordering food any time of the day and Bengaluru's culture of late-night sports screenings have helped young people stay awake for longer hours. During big tournaments like the World Cup, many people are skipping sleep with alcohol, caffeine and hefty late-night meals," said Dr Shilpa Singi, lead consultant, academies and strategies internal medicine, Aster Whitefield Hospital.

Doctors say the effects of sleep deprivation go well beyond feeling tired the following day. It can also cause irritability, poor concentration and gastrointestinal problems like acidity, acid reflux and indigestion.

Dr Pavan Yadav, clinical director and senior consultant–interventional pulmonology & sleep medicine, KIMS Hospitals, Electronics City, said, eating at irregular hours disrupts the body's circadian rhythm. "If people continue eating at irregular hours, there is repeated secretion of insulin, which can lead to poor blood sugar control, weight gain and eventually increase risk of diabetes."

Hence, older people with underlying conditions like diabetes are at higher risk of developing health issues. While healthy young adults may recover from the occasional game nights, Dr Ravindra Mehta, interventional pulmonologist, founder & director, Vaayu Chest & Sleep Specialists, said, sleep deprivation is far riskier for older adults. "Too much sleep deprivation, poor intake of fluids and food, and the combined consequences of both, which are cumulative — where one plus one equals four — can create significant issues. So, sleep deprivation must be managed appropriately."

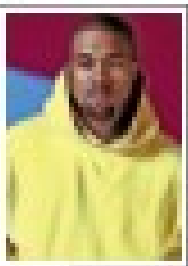
According to **The Economic Times**, quick-service restaurants, food delivery platforms and quick-commerce companies are reporting a 12-15% rise in demand over the past two weeks.



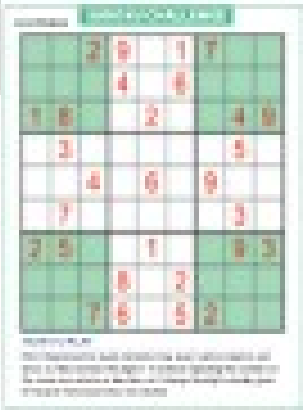
WHAT'S #TRENDING AND WHY

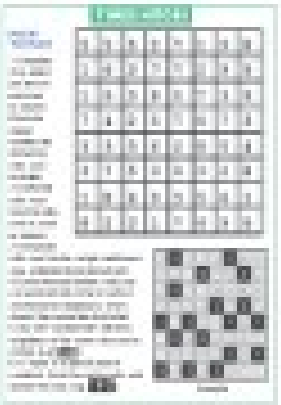
Shraddha Kapoor's father sparks explosive rift row in Maharashtra

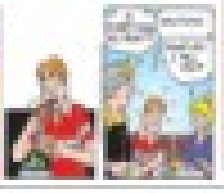
Kanye West in talks to settle ex-assistant's sexual harassment lawsuit

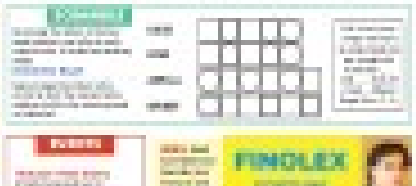


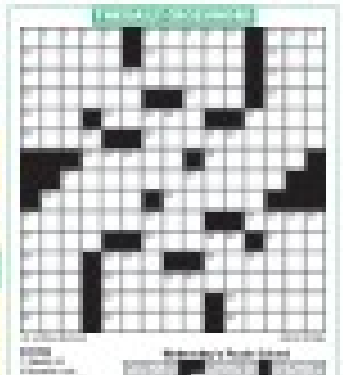
Miley Cyrus honoured with her own Barbie doll



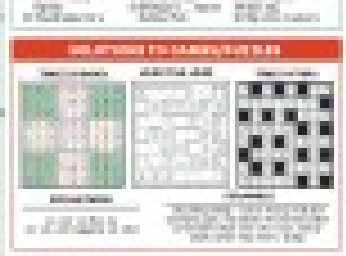








EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS



BOOK YOUR VEHICLE ADS

750g ganja flies between B'luru & M'luru within hours

Chaithanya.Swamy
@timesofindia.com

UNDER-SEAT SMUGGLING

Approximately 500 grams of marijuana was found under a passenger seat on Air India Express flight which arrived in Mangaluru from Bengaluru on the night of June 29. A few hours later, another narcotics haul of around 250 grams surfaced on a flight which landed in Bengaluru from Mangaluru

Bengaluru: Back-to-back recoveries of marijuana aboard two Air India Express flights within hours on Monday have triggered parallel investigations in Bengaluru and Mangaluru, raising concerns over the possible use of domestic flights as a conduit for narcotics trafficking.

In the two incidents, airport staff recovered a total of 750 grams of marijuana concealed beneath a passenger seat and in a backseat pocket.

The first incident came to light at Mangaluru International Airport on the night of June 29, when Air India Express flight IX-5501 from Bengaluru landed around 10.37pm.

Air India Express senior security officer Praveen Kumar Chiplukote said he was conducting a routine post-flight security inspection, during which he found two rectangular objects wrapped in aluminium foil and concealed beneath seat 30A.

The suspicious package was immediately placed on the aerobridge and taken for scanning. After confirming there was no explosive material inside, officers opened the silver foil packets and found a soap-like substance emitting a strong pungent smell.

Initially believing it to be soap, Chiplukote kept it in the office. When he reported for duty the following morning and examined it more closely, he suspected it was a narcotic substance compressed to resemble soap. The suspicious material, weighing approximately 500grams, was handed over to police Tuesday, who found the drug to be marijuana.

Just a few hours later, another suspected narcotics haul surfaced at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru.

According to the complaint filed by Ganesh, security associate manager with Air India Express, flight IX-5502 arrived from Mangaluru at 12.30am Monday. While cleaning the cabin, housekeeping staff member Chotu Kumar noticed a suspicious packet tucked into the seatback pocket of 22B. The packet was immediately handed over to security associate manager Karthik Surendran, who asked Ganesh to examine the item and initiate the necessary legal procedure.

Upon inspection, the packet was found to contain a green leafy substance wrapped in aluminium foil, suspected to be marijuana. The parcel was weighed around 250grams.

Preliminary inquiries suggest the passenger who occupied seat 22B may have transported marijuana and left it behind on the aircraft. A senior officer said it appears that the scanners at MIA and KIA failed to detect the marijuana. There is a possibility that the drug was sourced from abroad and transported on domestic flights.

Separate cases have been registered under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act at KIA police station in Bengaluru and Bajpe police station in Mangaluru.

The officers are examining CCTV footage from the airport premises and other evidence to determine the origin of the narcotic substances, identify those responsible and ascertain whether the consignments were part of a larger drug trafficking network.

Kenneth used AI, killed three of lover's family alone: Police

It's Cocktail Of Unpaid ₹56L Loan, Online Plot & His Affair

Rajiv.Kalkod@timesofindia.com

VICTIM RAISED ALARM, COLLAPSED

Kenneth

Shwetha

Kenneth and Shwetha fled the scene. Somasundar, before collapsing to his death, informed neighbours about the killers. The duo escaped to Tamil Nadu on a bike, which broke down near Tiruvannamalai, 200km from Bengaluru. Deputy commissioner of police (Whitefield) Saidulu Adavat said they were completing spot mahazar at Tiruvannamalai. "Shwetha and Kenneth explained where they abandoned the bike and from which point they boarded the bus to Puducherry," he said.

Bengaluru: Ten days after the triple murder shook Bengaluru, police investigations suggest techie Shwetha's live-in partner J Kenneth meticulously planned and executed the killings with help from AI on how to inflict stab wounds and what kind of injuries will prove fatal.

On June 22, Shwetha and Kenneth, also a software engineer, murdered her parents Somasundar and Muttulakshmi and her younger sister Supriya at their residence in Kadugodi over unpaid loans and bank reminders on EMIs.

Quoting from investigations, police said it was Kenneth who alone killed all three people while Shwetha watched in horror. Both Kenneth and Shwetha were arrested from Puducherry within a week of the murders.

Life on fast lane

According to police, Shwetha reportedly raised Rs 56 lakh in loans to fund Kenneth's lavish lifestyle. The trouble started when notices on unpaid EMI began arriving at her father Somasundar's residence in Nallurahalli. When her parents repeatedly questioned the couple on loans, Kenneth allegedly declared to Shwetha, "We'll eliminate them."

Adding to the tension, Shwetha recently discovered Kenneth had a girlfriend, a techie from Kerala, and rented a flat near HAL for her. When Shwetha confronted him, Kenneth made light of the accusation, claiming he was merely taking 'technical help' from her to launch a tech startup.

According to Kenneth's confession, he planned the murders on the night of June 21. His girlfriend had been to Kerala. Taking advantage of the empty house, Kenneth invited Shwetha's family to discuss the pending loan. Though all three came to the flat, Kenneth lost his nerve. The same night, Shwetha's mother visited their Sai Green flat — the couple's house — and stayed there.

However, the June 22 plan had a twist: Murder only Shwetha's mother and dispose of her body. Kenneth stabbed Muthhulakshmi repeatedly while she lay on the sofa watching TV. Shwetha allegedly stood at a distance, watching the assault.

When doorbell rang

The plan turned more grisly when the doorbell rang unexpectedly. Shwetha's father and her younger sister arrived at the flat an hour earlier than anticipated. To hide the evidence, Kenneth and Shwetha dragged Muthhulakshmi's body into the bedroom.

The moment Somasundar stepped inside, Kenneth stabbed him in the back. Somasundar retaliated, momentarily overpowered Kenneth, and fled into the corridor to scream for help, probe revealed. Inside the flat, Supriya began crying out in sheer terror. As Shwetha reportedly gagged and pinned her sister down, Kenneth stabbed the 20-year-old woman in the neck, stomach and back.

Jilted lover bought crude bombs from Honnavar for ₹600

Bengaluru: Four days after a jilted lover, 30, triggered an explosion in a cab in Tumakuru district leaving him dead, a man from Uttara Kannada district has come under police scanner for allegedly selling crude bombs to the deceased.

Nagendra allegedly abducted his former girlfriend, Ramya Nayak, from Bengaluru on June 27. Nagendra was planning to take her to Ankola in Uttara Kannada district as he wanted to marry her. However, following a complaint from Ramya's roommate, police contacted cab driver Praveen and asked him to stop at the nearest police station.

Overhearing the conversation, Nagendra pulled out three bombs he was carrying. Praveen snatched one, while Nagendra succeeded in lighting two bombs, which exploded quickly, setting the car on fire and charring Nagendra to death. Praveen and Ramya managed to escape unhurt.

Police said Nagendra purchased the crude bombs for Rs 600 (Rs 200 apiece) from a villager in Chandavar of Honnavar taluk on May 29. The bombs were sold allegedly by George Niklov Fernandes, 64, whose father worked in a Sivakasi factory in Tamil Nadu.

These bombs were mostly used to kill fish in ponds and lakes. On hearing about Nagendra's death in the explosion caused by crude bombs, George's blood sugar levels shot up and he was hospitalised. Tumakuru superintendent of police KV Ashok said they will take George into custody once he is discharged from hospital.

George lives in the village with his wife, while their only son, who has an MBA degree, is working in Bengaluru. TNN

Officials say beneficiaries can choose not to give info

▶ Continued from page 1

Another beneficiary from Banashankari said: "The govt earlier sought PAN details only for Gruha Lakshmi scheme, where income-tax payers were excluded. Is it now planning to deny Gruha Jyothi benefits to taxpayers as well?"

The energy minister told media: "What's wrong in asking citizens about their caste? There are complaints that some beneficiaries are misusing the scheme. The scheme is not based on caste, but electricity consumption."

Energy department officials further clarified: "Beneficiaries are free to either share the information or decline to do so. It won't affect their status under the scheme."

Bescom verified 2,536 beneficiaries on the first day of the statewide exercise Wednesday.

Average billing this month

With meter readers engaged in the verification drive, electricity bills for July will be generated based on consumers' average usage over the previous three months instead of actual meter readings. Officials said any difference will be automatically adjusted once regular meter reading resumes next month.

Consumers can avail all available modes (including subdivision cash counters, Bescom website and other third-party apps) to make payment for their July electricity bills.

Threat to witness: 3 Darshan fans held

Bengaluru: Three alleged fans of Kannada actor **Darshan Thoogudeepa**, main accused in the 2024 Renukaswamy murder case, were arrested Wednesday on charges of threatening a key witness in an attempt to prevent him from testifying before court.

According to police, the three accused, Venu, Suhas, and Puneeth, allegedly intimidated the 49th prosecution witness, who's from Chitradurga. Investigators said Puneeth managed a fan page named 'D Company', while Suhas and Venu are members of a Darshan Fans' Association in Tumakuru.

The witness informed the judge in court he was under pressure not to testify. Following the statement, the court directed police to provide security to the witness. Based on information gathered from the witness, police registered a case and found Suhas had allegedly called the witness under the pretext of holding a discussion.

Suhas reportedly drove the witness around in a car and pressured him not to depose in court. When the witness refused to comply, Suhas allegedly threatened him with consequences. The three accused are now in the custody of Kamakshipalya police. TNN

14-year-old boy flees hostel with ₹50 in hand, rescued

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Bengaluru: A 14-year-old boy, who ran away from his hostel, was rescued by Railway Protection Force (RPF) at KSR Bengaluru railway station Tuesday.

The teenager, who said he had just Rs 50 in his pocket and planned to leave the city by train, was handed over to BOSCO, an NGO that works with vulnerable children.

The NGO's coordinator Joseph Raj said the boy, originally from Raichur, had moved to Bengaluru with his family after his father found a job in the state capital. As his parents struggled to care for him, he was placed in a hostel, where he found it difficult to adjust academically and emotionally.

Raj clarified there was no allegation of harassment at the hostel, but the boy felt restricted and lacked emotional support.

Authorities contacted his father, who allegedly arrived in an intoxicated state. He has been directed to come back later.

Before his handover to the NGO, the child was taken to the RPF post, where officials provided care and counselled him in a child-friendly environment. The district child protection unit (DCPU) and railway childline were informed. During counselling, the boy disclosed that he had fled his hostel in Varthur without informing his parents or the hostel authorities.

Officials identified him as a child in need of care and protection (CNCP) and entrusted him to the NGO.

100 ambulances to be procured

▶ Continued from page 1

While the golden hour after trauma is one hour, the platinum period is 10 minutes.

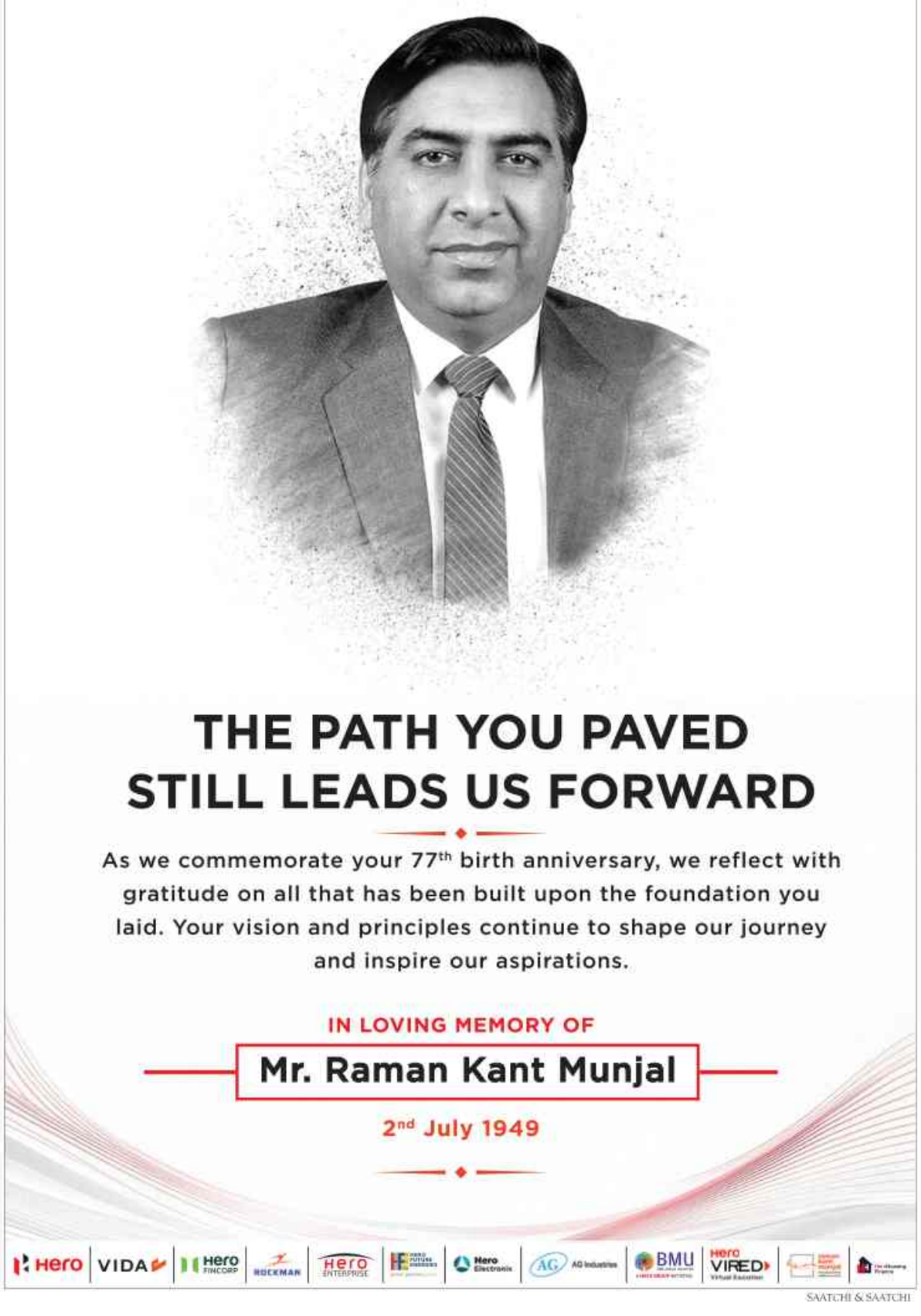
"In urban areas and hilly regions, traffic congestion and difficult terrain often prevent regular ambulances from reaching patients on time. Bike ambulances, equipped with emergency medical technician, basic medical equipment and emergency drugs, will stabilise patients and administer necessary treatment until a regular ambulance arrives," Dr Prabhudev Gowda, deputy director, Emergency Management and Research Institute, health department, told **TOI.**

Gowda said the condition of the vehicles was a big challenge. "Now, we've proposed procuring 100 new vehicles. We will also recruit trained manpower accordingly."

Joshi seeks probe against KPSC chief

Bengaluru: Union minister **Pralhad Joshi** wrote to governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot, seeking a probe against Karnataka Public Service Commission chairman Shivashankarappa S Sahukar over recruitment of industrial extension officers.

Joshi referred to allegations made by members of KPSC on the chairman's conduct during the recruitment process. He said the KPSC chairman violated the principles of natural justice by participating in the recruitment process in which his daughters were candidates. TNN



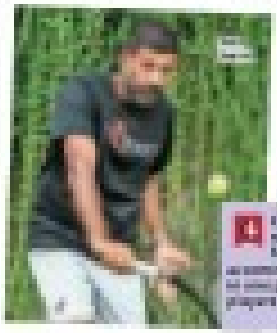
Bengaluru is a city that India's sporting club now calls home

Even athletes not from elsewhere come and spend months or months training in Bengaluru

– Mihir Kamble

The perfect residents train

'Why athletes choose Bengaluru'



A sporting culture decades in the making'

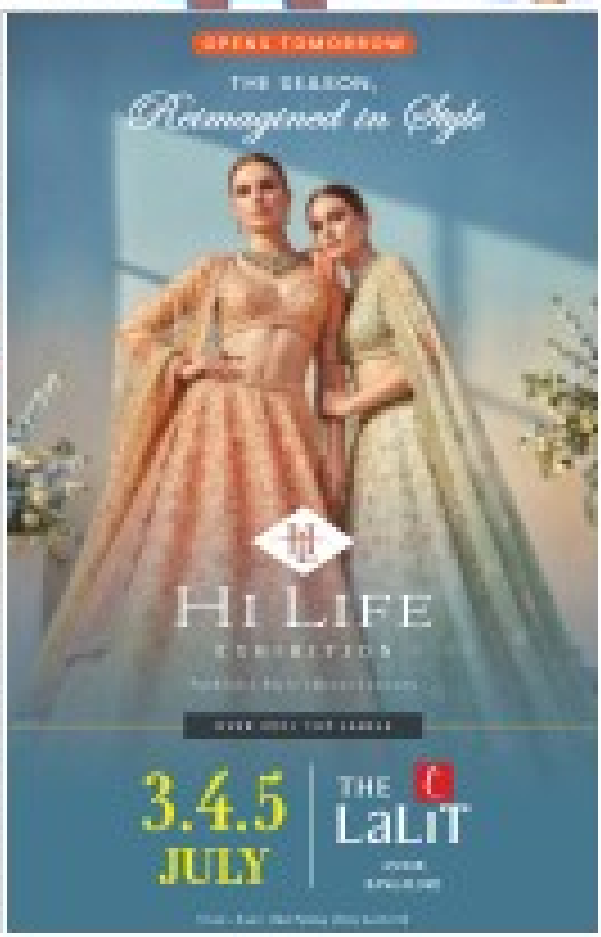
Coaching, physios, recovery centres, leisure spaces to wind up, accommodation, everything at one place. That's how players save time and energy

– Mihir Kamble

Indian Pickleball gets major boost ahead of World Cup 2026

Sponsoring the Indian team for the Pickleball World Cup reflects our commitment to enabling Indian athletes from the grassroots to the global stage

– Vinay Agrawal



BDA pushes to ease regn of apartment owners' bodies

Asks Govt To Offer Clarity On Mechanism

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Bengaluru: Amid growing demands from apartment owners to take over maintenance and management of BDA-built apartment complexes, Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA) has urged the govt to notify a "competent authority" for the registration of apartment owners' associations under Karnataka Apartment Ownership Act, 1972 (KAOA).

The move comes after some associations approached BDA, stating they were prepared to manage the upkeep of apartment complexes themselves. However, officials said the absence of clarity on the registration mechanism became a hurdle in recognising these associations and transferring maintenance responsibilities.

In a June 29 letter to the urban development department, BDA said apartment owners and residents across Karnataka were facing considerable difficulties in registering associations under KAOA.

A BDA official said: "There is an ambiguity and we have been hearing concerns from several residents that they were unable to proceed with the registration. If the govt clears this confusion, it will be a relief across the city."

Dhananjaya Padmanabhachar, from Karnataka Homebuyers' Forum, said: "Registering apartment associations under a govt-notified competent authority will give them legal recognition, enable grievances to be addressed without approaching civil courts and ensure compliance with Rera directions on land khata transfer. It will provide a legal identity to managing committee members. It's a great move."

CLARIFICATIONS SOUGHT BY AUTHORITY

- Authority or office empowered to receive and verify applications for registration
- Procedure to be followed for registration and recognition of apartment owners' associations
- Documents to be submitted, including the mandatory deed of declaration and bylaws
- Fixed timeline for scrutiny and disposal of applications
- Appeal or grievance-redress mechanism for applicants

BDA has urged state govt to notify a "competent authority" for registration of apartment owners' associations under Karnataka Apartment Ownership Act-1972

25-yr fight yields result? 274 buffer zone sites to get relief

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Bengaluru: Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) is set to hand in huge relief to more than 250 site owners in Banashankari 6th Phase caught in the Turahalli forest buffer zone dispute in south Bengaluru. The authority has urged the forest dept to offer a one-time settlement to end the impasse over its legally allotted sites.

In simple terms, these owners will get full possession — and, hence, freedom — to either construct a house or

TURAHALLI FOREST

secure sites. These sites have been in limbo after they were found to be coming under the notified buffer zone of Turahalli forests in south Bengaluru, preventing them from going ahead with construction despite having all valid papers.

Of these sites, 274 are in the buffer zone and 55 within the forest boundary. While a resolution is expected soon for 274 sites, the 55 sites falling under the forest boundary remain a challenge, a BDA official said.

In a letter dated June 23, BDA informed the principal secretary (forest) the issue pertains to sites along the Turahalli reserve forest boundary in blocks 1 to 11, spread across Turahalli, Hemmigepura, Lingadheeranahalli, Sompura and BM Kaval villages. The layouts were formed after BDA acquired 1,598 acres through notifications issued on Nov 15, 2000, and Aug 21, 2001.

CAUGHT IN LEGAL MESS

Several sites adjoining the forest later fell within the notified buffer zone. Hence, the forest department stopped granting construction permissions.

Following the stalemate, BDA conducted a joint survey in Sept 2025 along with forest and revenue departments. The assistant director of land records submitted a report in Nov 2025, followed by a drone survey in Jan 2026.

What initially appeared to affect over 1,400 sites was progressively narrowed to just 329. Based on the findings, BDA prepared a revised layout map and submitted it along with supporting documents to the deputy conservator of forests.

During discussions in May 2026, BDA officials, including the commissioner, met their forest department counterparts. The department agreed in principle to work towards a resolution for the 274 buffer zone sites through mutual agreement. It was proposed that BDA land, already under forest department possession, along with an additional 20 acres and 18 guntas in Turahalli village, be transferred through a land exchange — providing equivalent buffer area to the department while offering permanent relief to affected plot owners.

The issue was raised at two meetings chaired by the then forest minister on May 12 and 20. The minister acknowledged families' plight of being unable to build on legally purchased sites. Seeking a swift resolution, BDA has requested a one-time settlement to permanently end the uncertainty faced by plot owners who have waited since 2001.

Animal Ventured Out Of Sanctuary During Night For Food

Wild tusker trapped in railway fence, freed after hrs-long op

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Bengaluru: A journey back to the forest after a night of foraging in agricultural fields turned into a nightmare for a wild tusker Wednesday morning near Arekoppa village in Kanakapura taluk of Bengaluru South (Ramanagara) district.

The helpless jumbo got trapped inside a railway fence along Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, leaving it stranded for hours and triggering a frantic rescue operation.

Sources told **TOI** the tusker had ventured out of the sanctuary under the cover of darkness and entered agricultural fields in search of food. At daybreak, as the elephant attempted to retrace its path back into the sanctuary, it tried to squeeze through a narrow gap in the railway barricade — an opening commonly used by cattle grazing near the forest. However, for the tusker, the gap proved far too narrow.

Jagannath NH, deputy conservator of forests, Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, said, "The elephant may have ventured out from Boni Hekkalu forest area in Basavana Waade beat of Mugguru range of the sanctuary. Farmers who arrived at their fields early in the morning alerted us around 6.45am and our field staff immediately swung into action." Nagendra Prasad S, assistant conservator of forests at the sanctuary, said, "The elephant had managed to push half of its massive body through the gap before getting completely wedged inside the iron barricade. Unable to move either forward or backwards, the distressed animal struggled for hours, trumpeting in pain and exhaustion."

Officials mobilised personnel from Mugguru, Sangama and Halaguru ranges of the sanctuary, along with staff from the Kanakapura territorial forest division.

Veterinarians from Bannerghatta elephant task force, including Dr Kiran and Dr Girish, also rushed to the spot with their trained teams for the rescue operation.

"There was no alternative but to cut open the barricade using gas cutters. Technicians were called in to dismantle the iron fence," another official said, adding that the rescue operation continued until noon. Before the barricade was cut, veterinarians tranquilised the tusker. "Throughout the cutting operation, the elephant remained sedated and was continuously monitored by the veterinary team. Once the barricade was removed, the elephant was revived using vitamins and hydration supplements before being guided back into the sanctuary.

It did not suffer any injuries despite struggling for several hours, the ACF said

TOI

NIGHT ORDEAL: The tusker is believed to have ventured out from Boni Hekkalu forest area in Basavana Waade beat of Mugguru range

Not first case

The Kanakapura incident was not the first in the state. Similar cases have been reported in the recent past from Virajpet and the Nagarahole National Park landscape. The recurring incidents have rekindled the debate over use of railway barricades, with wildlife experts arguing that they can endanger elephants attempting to move between forests and farmlands.

Forest officials, however, defend the barriers, saying they have significantly curtailed crop raids and human-elephant conflict and remain a relatively inexpensive solution compared to other mitigation measures.

CMRS directs BMRCL to probe 3 years of Metro disruptions

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Bengaluru: Chief commissioner of railway safety and commissioner of Metro railway safety (southern range), Janak Kumar Garg, directed Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) to investigate Metro service disruptions reported over the last three years and submit a report detailing the corrective measures taken.

The authority has also asked BMRCL to carry out an audit of the effectiveness of its operational and maintenance practices.

The directive follows a representation by Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya, who had written to the commissioner, seeking a safety and maintenance audit of Namma Metro operations.

Citing media reports, the MP stated nearly 20 service disruptions had occurred over the past three years due to technical and other issues, with a majority reported on the Purple Line. In recent weeks, repeated disruptions, particularly at Cubbon Park station, caused severe inconvenience to commuters.

In a reply to the MP, CMRS said under the Metro Railways (Operation and Maintenance) Act, 2002, the commissioner conducts statutory inquiries into accidents involving loss of life or grievous injury, sanctions the opening of new Metro lines, and approves the introduction of new rolling stock, among other responsibilities.

The letter added that day-to-day operation and maintenance required for safe and reliable functioning of Metro railway system remain the responsibility of the Metro railway administration.

KERC plans tariff cut, rooftop solar energy users seek fixed charge waiver

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Bengaluru: Residents who invested lakhs of rupees in installing rooftop solar systems urged Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission to waive the fixed minimum charges levied on solar consumers, saying that would do more to promote clean energy than reducing the tariff paid for surplus electricity exported to the grid.

In a draft notification, KERC proposed reduction in tariffs paid for electricity generated from rooftop solar systems, citing a sharp decline in the cost of solar equipment and installation over the years. For domestic consumers installing systems of up to 10 kW, the tariff has been proposed at Rs 3.03 per unit, down from the current Rs 3.86 — a reduction of 22%. The revised tariff, if approved, will apply to new installations commissioned from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2029. Residents who installed rooftop solar systems under PM Surya Ghar Yojana said exporting surplus electricity has already become less rewarding because of low export tariffs and fixed minimum charges. They said KERC should waive or reduce the fixed minimum charge to improve financial viability of rooftop systems.

CN Srinivasa from JP Nagar 7th Phase said: "Tariff has come down from around Rs 9 per unit a decade ago to Rs 3-4 per unit now. Many of us invested lakhs of rupees to switch to solar power. Instead of encouraging alternative energy sources, govt seems to be penalising those who made the transition," he pointed out.

A JP Nagar resident questioned the disparity between the rate at which electricity supply firms buy surplus power and the tariff consumers pay for grid-drawn electricity. "If Escoms are selling electricity to us at a certain rate, the rate at which they procure power from us should be comparable, if not the same. KERC should provide relief by waiving fixed minimum charges," he said. Sivaraman Hariharan from Kasturi Nagar said he hasn't been able to obtain details on utilisation of fixed charges collected by Bescom despite filing RTI applications.

Rowdy murder case accused shot at

Bengaluru: A woman sub-inspector from JP Nagar police station fired at a murder accused in self-defence when the latter attacked police personnel in Talaghattapura Wednesday.

SI Savinaya fired on the left knee of Santosh Kumar, accused of leading the gang that hacked rowdy Rajubhai, alias Raju, on JP Nagar main road last week. Santosh has been shifted to hospital and is recuperating. Police had earlier arrested Santosh and his three accomplices for the murder. "They had hidden the weapons used in the crime in bushes. The police team took Santosh to the spot to recover them. Santosh attacked the personnel with a stone, forcing police to open fire," an officer said. TNN

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tender & notices

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VARIOUS DESTINATIONS OF GUJARAT, RAJASTHAN, MADHYA PRADESH, MAHARASHTRA & OTHER LOCATIONS

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Approx Revenue - ₹50 Cr/Annum
Period of Contract: 1 year
Participation Details:

- Tender Document will be sent to the participants by email on ₹50,000/- as earnest money by Demand Draft in favor of M/s Saint Gobain India Pvt. Ltd., payable at Mumbai on or before 05th July 2026.
- The DD must be sent to the below mentioned address. This amount would be refunded within 3 months from the date of submission of application.
- Please mention email id on which tender document must be sent.
- The Tender Document will be sent between 06th July 2026 to 08th July 2026.
- The last date for submission of quotation shall be 15th July 2026.

CONTACT DETAILS:
Annu Anjan / Chetan Bhujbal
Email Id:
annu.anjan@saint-gobain.com
chetan.bhujbal@saint-gobain.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE
This is to bring to the Notice of N.Jeevan S/o. Late Naveen and Smt.Vathsala, and Grandson of Late R.Muniraju and Smt. Lalitha. Since you are not heard and seen since the year 2021, the Site No.19, Ashwathkatte Road, Old Gurappanapalya, Bangalore-560029 is up for sale, if you have any objections please contact Mr. Umesh or Smt. Lalitha within 15 days from the date of this publication and objection or claims received thereafter will not bind Mr. Umesh.K and Mr. Umesh.K will proceed to purchase the below mentioned property as there are no claimants/objections.
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North to South: 25 Feet & East to West: 30 Feet.
Sd/- Umesh.K, Advocate
63,12th Cross, 5th Main, Wilson Garden, Bangalore-30
Mobile: 7795641152
Place: Bangalore Date: 02-07-2026

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personal

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as K RAJAN, S/o Khushiram Dialdas Hotwani, R/o M2, Townsend, Avalahalli, Yelahanka, Bengaluru - 560064, Karnataka, hereby declare that I shall henceforth be known as RAJAN KHUSHIRAM HOTWANI for all purposes. Both names refer to one and the same person.

I Abhiishek Chugh S/O, Sanjeev Kumar Chugh R/o Mr-1204, Golden Blossom Apartments Whitefield-hoskote Main Road, Opposite Sai Baba Ashram, Kadugodi, Kadugodi Plantation, Bengaluru, Karnataka - 560067 have changed my name to Abhiishek Sanjeev Chugh.

I, Shanu Tarigonda , W/O Mahamood Khan Lodi, residing at #66, 1st Floor, 3rd Cross, Wajid Layout, Hegde Nagar Main Road, Thanisandra, Bangalore 560077, Karnataka, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Tharigonda Shanu

I, FAHARANA, W/o, Sri. Mohammad Jameel, residing at No.141, Near Old Post Office Road, Andersonpet Post, K.G.F. 563113, Kolar District, Karnataka, have changed my name to FARHANA BEGAM, vide Affidavit dt: 02.02.2026 Notary Thangaraj S, K.G.F.

I, Shubha Manjunath W/o Late A V Manjunath, residing at No.41, Kaundinya, 9th Main, Radhakrishna Layout 2nd Stg, Padmanabhanagar, B'lore - 70, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from Shubhamathi B A to Shubha Manjunath vide Affidavit dated 25.06.2026, sworn before Notary S N Madhu B'lore.

I, formerly known as KAMAL RAJAN, W/o Rajan Khushiram Hotwani, R/o M2, Townsend, Avalahalli, Yelahanka, Bengaluru - 560064, Karnataka, hereby declare that I shall henceforth be known as KAMAL RAJAN HOTWANI for all purposes. Both names refer to one and the same person.

I, Ahmed Jameel kanak pullai mohomed born on (10/07/1965) residing at NO 60, 6th CROSS KANAKANAGAR, R.T NAGAR POST BENGALURU 560032], Have changed my name to Jameel Ahmed Kanakapullai Mohomed vide Affidavit dated 23/06/2026

I, Rohini Ravishankar , W/O B Ravishankar #169 3rd cross 7th block Koramangala Bangalore 560095 , Have to changed my name to K S Rohini. For all purposes.

I SHAZIA SYED ABUBAKAR #D106 Prakruti Meadows Amruthalli Byatarayanapura Bangalore 92 Change my name TO SHARIF SHAZIA AMAN

LOST & FOUND

I, Abhijna J, have lost my B.Sc. Zoology Consolidated Grade Card (Document ID: ALAVZO020), issued by the University of Calicut, Malappuram, Kerala, on my college campus. If anyone finds this document, Kindly contact : 93614 42628

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Families of queer individuals are more accepting now; can't say the same about the society

SHEETAL BHAT

'Pride Month may be over, but the fight for LGBTQIA+ continues'

ARUN PADMANABHAN

Bangalore Mirror

OUT PROUD

'Audiences are very black and white'

Why SIR has become more than just a bureaucratic drill for Cong

ManuAiyappa.Kanathanda
@timesofindia.com

ZERO ROOM FOR ERROR

"In scores of assembly seats, margins boil down to just a few thousand votes. Even a 1% to 2% artificial reduction in traditional support bases can flip a constituency's result

MN Patil | POLITICAL ANALYST

Bengaluru: The special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has triggered deep anxiety within governing Congress, which is treating the drive as a high-stakes battle to preserve its foundational electoral math rather than a simple bureaucratic exercise.

The political panic stems directly from the state's delicate demographic balance. At the heart of the friction is the survival of Ahinda, a social coalition of the powerful alliance of minorities, backward classes, and Dalits engineered by former chief minister Siddaramaiah.

State data shows Ahinda communities collectively represent an estimated 65% to 70% of Karnataka's population. Within this matrix, Muslims (12%), Scheduled Castes (17%), and Scheduled Tribes (7%) alone form a massive 36% voting block that Congress relies on heavily to win tight races.

Congress functionaries openly worry that a rigorous physical verification process will disproportionately impact these very groups, altering the arithmetic in dozens of closely contested seats where victory margins are thin.

The state cabinet recently passed a formal resolution targeting the execution of the month-long drive, which comes after a 24-year hiatus.

"We raised 12 objections to the way SIR is conducted. The CEC and Election Commission are acting as puppets in the hands of the central govt," home minister Priyank Kharge alleged, citing concerns over opacity and the potential risk of mass disenfranchisement of poor, elderly, and migrant voters who frequently shift residences.

Chief minister DK Shivakumar has taken a highly proactive stance, urging party workers to guard the rolls. "The right to vote is the right to live. Our govt will actively facilitate alternative identity and residence certificates so no genuine voter is left out," Shivakumar said, while explicitly warning citizens that dropping off the voter list could eventually complicate their access to the state's flagship welfare guarantee schemes.

BK Hariprasad, state Congress president, has deployed specialised party observers across all districts and taluks under the campaign 'Congress Nadey Nimma Mata Rakshane Kade' (Congress marches towards protecting your vote). He has tasked booth level agents with ensuring vulnerable citizens fill out forms correctly to secure their voting rights.

However, opposition BJP has dismissed these allegations, accusing the governing party of fear-mongering to protect fraudulent entries, especially among migrants from different states.

"The Election Commission is an independent institution," countered Prabhu Chauhan, BJP MLA. "This process is a necessary purification of the voter list to identify migrations and eliminate bogus names, which is exactly why Congress is jittery."

Chethan Shivakumar

TICKING BOXES: BLOs visited houses in Bengaluru and distributed forms to residents as part of SIR on Wednesday

Shortage of BLOs?

BJP alleged that the state govt was hampering the SIR exercise by failing to appoint an adequate number of BLOs. Opposition leader R Ashoka said officials complained of not receiving TA/DA and being denied permission to participate in the exercise. He also alleged irregularities in BLO deployment, claiming that non-officials and Congress functionaries had been appointed in some places and that party symbols were being displayed during door-to-door verification.

Exercise sparks turf war

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Bengaluru: The Election Commission's special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has turned into a high-stakes political battle, with BJP and JD(S) coordinating at the grassroots in several areas, while Congress has activated its party network, govt machinery and allied organisations.

As the door-to-door verification phase gathers pace, political parties are leaving little to chance by deploying booth level agents (BLAs), volunteers and support groups to assist people with documentation and monitor the revision process.

JD(S) members say the party has been working closely with BJP in constituencies where NDA has a strong presence. In places where BJP has a smaller base, JD(S) workers have helped ensure supporters of both parties are not affected during the revision.

"For instance, in Sira, there was strong objection as the BLO was taking along only Congress BLAs. So, BJP and JD(S) joined hands and objected to the decision," said a JD(S) functionary.

KA Thippeswamy, former JD(S) MLC, said there was no formal understanding on appointing BLAs, but admitted workers of both parties were coordinating locally.

Meanwhile, Congress has mobilised its frontal organisations and allied groups to help people secure documents required during the verification exercise. "Our frontal organisations keep in direct touch with tahsildars and coordinate with voters to procure permanent residency certificates wherever required," said GC Chandrashekar, Rajya Sabha MP and Congress functionary.

He said "the second war room by an allied NGO is also funded by Congress which will help the party cover ground independently."

Dalit Sangarsh Samiti (DSS), which is working alongside Congress on the issue, said it has sent its own volunteers to SC, ST and other vulnerable localities where many people fear their names could be deleted. "While we are discussing and talking with the Congress govt on ways and means to ensure that this exercise does not snatch voting rights of eligible voters, we have sent our own workers to places where the governing party cannot reach," said DSS activist Indhudhar Honnapura. Honnapura said that in his own locality he was unable to trace Congress-appointed BLAs and was relying on DSS volunteers to assist people during the exercise.

Attendance for officials

In response to a letter from chief electoral officer V Anbukumar, the e-governance department has said officials engaged in SIR work need not attend office and can mark themselves on other duty (OOD) in the Kartavya attendance app. "This reiterates the state's commitment to extending full cooperation to ECI in conduct of SIR," said Pankaj Kumar Pandey, secretary, e-governance department.

DOORSTEP VERIFICATION for Gruha Jyothi

What beneficiaries need to know

The govt has begun a statewide door-to-door verification of Gruha Jyothi scheme beneficiaries. The exercise aims to weed out ineligible claims, update records and ensure the electricity subsidy reaches eligible households. Here's what consumers should know before Escom staff visit their homes

WHAT THE SCHEME ENTAILS

- Launched in July 2023, it provides eligible domestic consumers free electricity up to 200 units a month, subject to conditions
- More than 1.7 crore beneficiaries have availed benefit
- Govt spent Rs 28,000 crore till 2025-26 and allocated Rs 10,578 crore for 2026-27

WHO WILL VISIT

Officials from Bescom, Mescom, Hescom, Gescom and CESC will visit to verify beneficiary details, record meter readings and update information through a mobile app

KEEP THESE DOCUMENTS READY

- Aadhaar card (for verification only)
- Passport-size photograph
- Voter ID
- Pan card
- Ration card
- Caste certificate
- Tenancy/rental agreement (if applicable)
- BPL/APL card details

HOW SUBSIDY IS CALCULATED

- Free entitlement is based on average monthly consumption between April 2022 and March 2023
- Bills are zero if consumption stays within the eligible limit
- Consumers pay only for additional units if usage exceeds the eligible limit but remains below 200 units
- If monthly consumption crosses 200 units, the full bill is payable

WHAT WILL BE VERIFIED

- Identity and address
- Electricity account and meter details
- Eligibility under the scheme
- Occupancy status and supporting documents

WHY VERIFICATION IS BEING DONE

The govt aims to detect

- Multiple meters in one person's name
- Outdated records
- Deceased beneficiaries
- Tenants who have shifted
- Commercial establishments using residential connections

REMEMBER

- Verification can only be completed through an on-site visit
- Cooperate with Escom staff and keep documents ready
- The statewide exercise is expected to be completed within two months

— Manu Aiyappa Kanathanda

State to issue SOP on temple donations

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Belagavi: The govt will soon issue a standard operating procedure (SOP) for all A, B and C-category muzrai temples to ensure transparent management of donations and temple funds, deputy CM G Parameshwara said.

At Suvarna Vidhana Soudha Wednesday, Parameshwara, also muzrai minister, said the decision was a precautionary measure in the wake of the donation controversy surrounding Ram Mandir in Ayodhya.

"The SOP will focus on proper accounting and monitoring of temple funds," he said. "We will not allow temple funds to be misused. Stringent measures will be taken to prevent any wastage of money. The incident that recently came to light in Ayodhya should serve as a warning for all of us."

He said the govt will closely monitor temples, especially those receiving substantial donations, and enforce strict controls. "Tahsildars and deputy commissioners will conduct monthly reviews and submit reports to ensure accountability and transparency," he said. He said revenue generated by a temple must be used for the development of that temple.

Be prepared for severe drought: DCM

NOTED: G Parameshwara at Belagavi division-level Revenue Day programme on Wednesday

Deputy CM G Parameshwara has directed officials of the revenue department to be prepared to tackle a potentially severe drought situation triggered by the continuing impact of El Nino. At Suvarna Vidhana Soudha, Parameshwara, who holds the revenue portfolio, said: "The responsibility of tackling this drought situation is on our shoulders. El Nino appears to be developing into a super El Nino, which could cause a drought of a kind the state has rarely witnessed. Our information suggests such a situation has not occurred in more than 150 years. We must understand the gravity of this crisis," he said.

Hariprasad: Why did Ram Madhav meet ex-ISI officer?

State Congress president **BK Hariprasad** questioned a reported meeting between Ram Madhav, former RSS pracharak and former BJP general secretary, and a retired major general of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) in Colombo, asking who authorised an RSS functionary to engage in matters concerning India's foreign policy. At a seminar in Bengaluru, Hariprasad cited a media report and asked whether the ministry of external affairs had "outsourced the country's foreign policy to an RSS pracharak". He questioned why the alleged interactions had not been disclosed publicly and demanded BJP clarify their purpose and outcome. Madhav denied the interaction was part of any track-2 diplomacy. He said he attended the annual South Asia Dialogue organised by International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), which brought together scholars and participants from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, the US and UK.

RSS meet in Belagavi

RSS will hold its three-day Prant Pracharak (State Pracharak) meeting in Belagavi from July 10 to 12. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, Sarkaryawah Dattatreya Hosabale, Prant Pracharaks and senior functionaries from across the country are expected to attend. The annual organisational meeting will review activities over the past year, assess progress, strengthen coordination, and finalise plans for expansion and outreach. Representatives from different states are expected to present reports and discuss strategies to strengthen the Sangh's grassroots network. The meeting assumes significance as it comes weeks after home minister Priyank Kharge asked RSS to register formally and publicly disclose details of its legal status, finances, office-bearers, assets and tax compliance, citing the need for greater transparency

IANS

IN TOUCH: CM DK Shivakumar interacts with farmers from Ramanagara during a meeting at his home office on Wednesday

E20 fuel: Priyank slams Centre

Home minister Priyank Kharge criticised the Centre over the rollout of 20% ethanol blended petrol (E20), alleging that it had made "3.6 crore Indians part of an experiment" without adequate evidence, public consultation or consensus. In a post on X, Priyank cited the Centre's submissions before the Supreme Court, claiming the govt had admitted that the impact of ethanol blending was still being assessed while Union minister Nitin Gadkari had defended the policy. He alleged E20 had reduced fuel efficiency, damaged engines and affected millions of vehicles not compatible with the fuel.

No chief for 4 months, disability panel office sees plaints pile up

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Officials said the panel is now awaiting the appointment of a minister before placing the names for approval

Bengaluru: The post of the state commissioner for Rights of Persons with Disabilities has remained vacant for the past four months, leaving thousands of grievances pending. Disability rights activists allege that the absence of a commissioner has brought hearings to a standstill, delaying justice for persons with disabilities across Karnataka.

The office, which serves as the primary redressal body for complaints related to denial of rights, recruitment disputes, accessibility issues, fake disability certificates and welfare benefits, has remained largely non-functional since the previous commissioner's tenure ended in Feb this year. They claimed that over 2,500 complaints are filed with the office every year, but disposal has been poor due to the vacant post.

According to members of disability rights organisations, complainants from districts such as Mangaluru and Chikkaballapur continue to travel to Bengaluru for scheduled hearings, only to return without any progress in their cases. Activists said both newly filed and long-pending complaints have remained unresolved, leaving persons with disabilities without timely redressal.

A member of the Association of People with Disability said: "Complaints related to denial of facilities, fake disability certificates and delays in medical examinations are going unaddressed... Every year, at least 2,500 complaints are filed, but disposal remains poor. We have received many complaints from people that the purpose of the department is not being fulfilled."

Shamla Iqbal, secretary, department for the empowerment of differently abled and senior citizens, said: "The committee has scrutinised the applications and shortlisted candidates for the post. We are ready to submit names to the minister for approval. However, as the ministerial post is currently vacant, we are awaiting the appointment of the new minister before the process can move forward."

Man kills wife over dowry & weight taunts, arrested

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Dharwad: A 29-year-old woman was strangled to death allegedly by her husband over dowry demands and repeated taunts about her weight in Hanasi village of Navalgund taluk in Dharwad district. Police arrested four persons, including her husband, in connection with the murder.

The victim has been identified as Priyanka Kamalakar, 29. The prime accused, Basavaraj Waddar, along with three others — Renavva, Subhash and Siddaramesh — has been taken into custody by Navalgund police.

According to police, Priyanka and Basavaraj got married in 2024. While the couple reportedly lived peacefully during the initial months of their marriage, the relationship later deteriorated. The victim's family alleged that Basavaraj and his relatives subjected Priyanka to continuous physical and mental harassment, demanding additional cash and gold from her parental home.

Police said Basavaraj also repeatedly humiliated his wife over her weight, allegedly telling her that she was "too fat" and incapable of conceiving or bearing a child. The issue frequently led to heated arguments between the couple.

On Monday night, another quarrel allegedly broke out at their house in Hanasi village. During the altercation, Basavaraj allegedly strangled Priyanka to death. The accused are also suspected of attempting to conceal the crime.

The incident came to light after Priyanka's family grew suspicious about the circumstances surrounding her death and lodged a complaint with police.

Based on the complaint, Navalgund police registered a case of murder and dowry harassment.

Following an investigation, police arrested Basavaraj and three other accused for their alleged involvement in the crime.

3 killed after wall collapses on four houses

Three persons, including two children, were killed and three others suffered injuries when a wall collapsed on a row of four houses following a landslip triggered by heavy rain near Mangaluru early Wednesday.

Officials said six people were trapped under the debris after the wall gave way at 4.30am in Nagori, Kankanady.

Rescuers found three dead when they reached the spot: Anamika Chaurasiya, 8, Tanu Chaurasiya, 4, from Bihar, and Shanta, 46, from Udupi. The survivors are Alka, 14, Anusha, 11, and Balakrishna, 48. Police said four families were living in rented houses. When the walls collapsed, two families were trapped. TNN

TIMES NATION

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | THURSDAY, JULY 2, 2026

ON SALMAN'S PLEA, 'KALA HIRAN' MAKERS TELL DELHI HC THE FILM WON'T BE SENT TO CENSOR BOARD TILL JULY 6

DELHI HC DIRECTS REMOVAL OF SOME OBJECTIONABLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS TARGETING BJP MP RAGHAV CHADHA

HACK OF THE DAY — **SET YOUR FAMILY MEMBER AS A LEGACY CONTACT ON FACEBOOK**

WHAT IT SOLVES: Ensures your Facebook profile is managed or deleted according to your wishes after death

WHAT TO DO: Choose a trusted adult friend or family member through Facebook Accounts Centre

STEPS:

1. Open Settings and Privacy, then Accounts Centre
2. Select Account ownership > control > Memorialisation
3. Choose your account and pick a Facebook friend
4. Decide whether they can download shared content
5. Send them a notification now or skip it

NOTE: Legacy contacts cannot read private messages, log in, or post as you

SCAN FOR MORE HACKS

Tip from arghanshubose@timesinternet.in

Woman ties drunk hubby to pole, tapes his mouth

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bhopal: A woman protesting against a liquor shop in Madhya Pradesh's Balaghat district tied her drunk husband to an electricity pole and taped his mouth shut after he turned up at the protest site in an inebriated state and allegedly disrupted the agitation.

The incident took place on Tuesday in Budhi, where women have been staging a sit-in since April 13, demanding the liquor shop be shifted out of a residential area. A video of the episode has gone viral on social media.

Police said the man allegedly abused women demonstrators, created a ruckus and argued that the liquor shop should not be removed. His wife, who has been part of the agitation and was already upset over his alleged drinking habit, lost her temper when he reached the site drunk. Police later reached the spot and freed the man.

Cells grew faster: Research

▶ Continued from page 1

Researchers introduced a genetic change that increased production of fusion protein, resulting in cells that grew faster and produced more offspring. After five generations, the faster-growing variant had outcompeted the original, demonstrating selection and competition operating in a fully synthetic chemical system, the university said. While a human genome is roughly 3 million kilobase pairs (kbp) in size, SpudCell's genome is relatively tiny at 90 kbp.

Less than 1% cases disposed of by Bengal SIR tribunals in 100 days

Another Former HC Judge Hearing Appeals Resigns

Debashis Konar & Srishti Lakhotia | TNN

TOI

LONG WAIT AHEAD: Only 30,000 appeals of 33 lakh have been heard

Kolkata: Bengal's SIR tribunals, burdened with 33 lakh appeals, have disposed of only about 30,000 cases — less than 1% of the total — in the 100 days since they became operational. If proceedings move at the current pace, it will take more than 25 years for the 19 tribunals to clear the backlog.

Adding to the workload, the tribunals have also been hit by resignations. Former Calcutta high court judge Ranjit Bag, who was handling appeals from South 24 Parganas district, resigned Wednesday citing health reasons.

Former HC Chief Justice T S Sivagnanam, who headed the tribunals hearing appeals from Kolkata and North 24 Parganas, had quit on similar grounds soon after the West Bengal assembly poll results were announced on May 4. A retired judge from Bihar is also learnt to have resigned.

State govt has named the heads of two SIR tribunals — retired judges Biswajit Basu and Samapti Chatterjee — to chair commissions that will probe complaints related to corruption and women's safety. The two are yet to take up their new assignments.

The 19 tribunals were set up in compliance with a Supreme Court order to hear appeals against deletion of names from the electoral rolls, as well as inclusion of names in the list, during the SIR exercise. They started functioning on March 20. As many as 27 lakh names were deleted from the electoral rolls during judicial scrutiny, which was the last phase of the Bengal SIR.

Officials associated with the process said the tribunals function almost like a court: they verify documents, including electoral records, and conduct hearings, if needed. But unlike a regular court, the tribunals lack the administrative and technological infrastructure necessary to handle such a large number of cases, the officials said.

Agniveer aspirant gets police nod after HC prod

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Kolkata: A 20-year-old Agniveer aspirant initially denied a police clearance as his and his father's names were struck off the SIR roll secured relief from the SIR appellate tribunal in Cooch Behar, leading to police clearance following the Calcutta high court's prod on June 17.

Akash Sarkar has now joined the force as an Agniveer.

Akash and his father Faruk had filed appeals against the deletion in the appellate tribunal in April. It was only after the Calcutta HC's Jalpaiguri circuit bench of Justice Bivas Pattanayak on June 17 directed an expeditious hearing that the tribunal on June 25 disposed of their cases and their names were restored.

Akash had received police clearance in Nov 2025, but its validity expired in six months.

SIR-deleted unable to sell land, says PIL

Subrata Chattoraj and Srishti Lakhotia | TNN

Kolkata: A PIL filed in the Calcutta high court has claimed that those whose names were deleted from the electoral roll after SIR were unable to sell property. The HC on Wednesday directed the petitioner to specify the cases where such sales were denied. The matter will next be heard on July 7.

Senior Advocate Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharyya said, "Some poor people want to get their daughter married and sell their land. As their names are not on the voter list, they are unable to."

The court asked Bhattacharyya to provide evidence where a person could not sell their land just because his/her name was deleted in SIR. "The difficulty is they are not providing it in writing," Bhattacharyya told the ACJ.

INDIA DIGEST

Bus blaze kills 8 on R'sthan expressway

Eight sleeping passengers were killed and 28 injured when a private AC bus collided with a multi-axle trailer truck on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway in Rajasthan's Dausa district early Wednesday, triggering a fire that engulfed both vehicles. Six of the victims were charred beyond recognition, police said. The collision occurred around 2.50am as the Hans Travels bus, ferrying 36 passengers from Haridwar in Uttarakhand to MP's Indore, rammed into the truck moving in the same direction, police said in a preliminary technical report.

Two Maha cops held with tiger skins, pangolin scales

In a major intelligence-led anti-poaching operation, Chhattisgarh forest department busted a suspected interstate wildlife trafficking network operating across one of central India's most critical tiger habitats with the arrest of two Maharashtra Police personnel from whom two tiger skins and pangolin scales were seized in Bastar's Kanker district. The accused cops — Baburao Madavi and Bijeshwar Gedam, both from Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district — were intercepted under "Operation Safe Passage" while allegedly transporting two tiger skins and other poached items on a motorcycle near the border.

4-year-old Haryana boy drowns in borewell

For nearly nine hours, four-year-old Nirvair Singh clung to life in a dark, 220ft-deep borewell. It took 21 hours of frantic work by rescuers to reach him. By then, though, he had drowned. Haryana Police filed a case of death by negligence against the owners of the borewell for leaving it open and unguarded. "He had several injuries and bruises to the head and chest. We found muddy water inside his lungs," medical officer Dr Sumit said after autopsy.

Pjb adds 30 more sacred words in sacrilege law list

Three days before jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargajj informed Punjab legislators of Akal Takht's strong objections to certain clauses of AAP govt's amended anti-sacrilege law — including replacing 'Bir' with 'Saroop' — Punjab Bureau of Investigation had issued an amended circular, adding 30 more reverential terms to the list for probe into sacrilege cases.

HC rues trend of newlyweds being told to seek police cover

Madhya Pradesh HC has cautioned advocates against indiscriminately advising newly married couples to approach courts for police protection, especially in cases in which there was no threat or apprehension to the newlyweds. The observation on Tuesday came during the hearing on a habeas corpus petition filed by a woman.

19 foreign nationals get 20-yr jail for smuggling ₹575 cr heroin into India

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: A special NDPS court in Bhuj Tuesday sentenced 19 foreign nationals — 18 Pakistanis and one Afghan — to 20 years' rigorous imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 2 lakh on each for trying to smuggle heroin worth Rs 575 crore into India through the Kutch coast.

The convictions relate to three separate drug seizures made off the Kutch coast between 2020 and 2022 by Gujarat's Anti-Terror Squad.

A total of 22 people — 19 Pakistani nationals, one Afghan, one Kenyan citizen and an Indian — were arrested and charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Additional sessions judge VA Buddha convicted 19 of the accused and acquitted Munaf Halari, of Kenya citizen, and Shahid Sumra of Kutch. Another accused, Pakistani national Abdul Karim Bhat, died during the trial.

The three cases involved the seizure of 115 kg of heroin valued at Rs 575 crore in the international market.

In the first case, on Jan 6, 2020, ATS intercepted the Pakistani boat Al Zamzam and recovered 35 kg of heroin. Nine crew members were arrested. In the second case, on April 15, 2021, ATS intercepted a boat and seized 30 kg of heroin valued and arrested six persons. In the third operation, on Oct 8, 2022, ATS intercepted a Pakistani fishing boat carrying seven crew and recovered 50 kg of heroin.

Farooq, Mehbooba join calls for India-Pak talks

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Srinagar: Former Jammu and Kashmir chief ministers Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti joined nearly 60 signatories from across India in calling for renewed dialogue between India and Pakistan, inviting a stinging criticism from BJP.

The party accused them of "once again choosing to echo Pakistan's narrative instead of standing with the victims of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism".

In a letter to the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, Farooq, Mehbooba and others have appealed to the two govts to take meaningful and sustained steps towards restoring peace, normalcy, dialogue and cooperation in South Asia.

Raj, MP sarpanches 'broker' kids into begging in Gujarat

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Ahmedabad: What appeared to be isolated cases of child begging at traffic signals, temples, malls and hospitals unfolded into an organised trafficking network after a crime branch crackdown to take child beggars off the streets ahead of the 2030 Commonwealth Games scheduled to be held in Ahmedabad.

The crime branch, which spearheaded the drive along with Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, found that some sarpanches (village chiefs) of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh had acted as brokers and sent children of poor families to Gujarat for begging.

So far, police have identified 276 children allegedly trafficked into Ahmedabad through the racket. Officials said the children will be enrolled in govt primary schools and provided food, shelter and rehabilitation, while investigators are preparing criminal cases against the accused.

"Most of these children hail from extremely poor families and were sent by their parents, who saw begging in big cities as a source of income," a senior crime branch officer said, adding the racket allegedly begins in villages where syndicate operators approach sarpanches to identify vulnerable families.

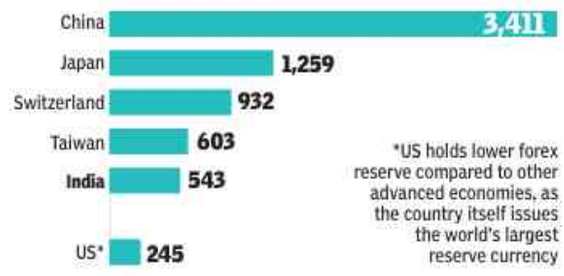
"Begging syndicates in Gujarat pay the sarpanches in Rajasthan and MP to procure children. The sarpanches give a portion of the money to the parents, keep the remaining amount for themselves and later continue to pocket 20% of the children's daily earnings," the officer said. The crime branch said it has identified the villages from where children are brought will book the sarpanches.

STATISTICS A slice of life in numbers

China holds more forex reserves than the next 4 combined

China's foreign currency reserves are far bigger than any other country's, at $3.4 trillion. India is in the top five with $543billion, which is only about one-sixth of China's reserves

Top countries by forex reserves ($Bn) excluding gold, 2026



Source: Visual Capital

HC: Fin freedom has fuelled rise in live-in relationships

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Raipur: Changing social realities, particularly the growing financial independence of women, have contributed to the proliferation of live-in relationships, the Chhattisgarh high court observed, dismissing an appeal against the acquittal of a 32-year-old man accused of rape on the false promise of marriage.

The appellant, a 40-year-old woman, had challenged a Raipur additional sessions court's order dated June 24, 2025, acquitting the accused, who was booked for offences under IPC sections 376(2)(k)(n) and 377. She ha

A division bench of Justices Sanjay S Agrawal and Narendra Kumar Vyas on June 29 upheld the acquittal of the accused at the admission stage, stating the evidence established a long-standing physical relationship between two consenting adults rather than a case of rape induced by a promise of marriage.

The complainant, a project manager with a civic body, became acquainted with the accused in 2019 while pursuing an MBA at IIM-Raipur. She alleged the accused established a physical relationship with her on the assurance of marriage, but later refused to marry her. She approached a trial court, which had dismissed her allegations.

'Where are his organs?' Widow of sailor who died in Venezuela

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Lucknow: Tears, unanswered questions and the daunting responsibility of raising a six-month-old baby alone now define the life of Ranjana, the widow of Indian seafarer Rakesh Chauhan, whose death in Venezuela in May this year and the subsequent discovery that nearly all his major internal organs were missing have triggered demands for an international investigation.

Sitting beside her husband's photo at her maternal home in Sadarpur in Gorakhpur's Chauri Chaura area, Ranjana says she has received neither substantive support from the company that recruited her husband for overseas deployment nor any financial assistance since his death. "I want justice. I want to know how my husband died and how his organs went missing," Ranjana told TOI.

The Forward Seamen's Union of India has stated that Rakesh's body was repatriated to India without any detailed autopsy findings or explanation from Venezuelan authorities regarding the precise circumstances of his death.

K'taka HC cites nat'l interest, refuses to quash UAPA case

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Bengaluru: Observing that the case pertains to national security threat and economic subversion, the Karnataka high court Wednesday dismissed the petitions filed by several persons associated with the Timothy Initiative, a US-based evangelical organisation, in relation to proceedings initiated under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and various BNS sections pursuant to a complaint registered by Kothanur police.

TIMOTHY INITIATIVE

"One of the gravest threats to national security in the present times is the clandestine funding of extremism. Funding, therefore, becomes the oxygen that enables extremist movements to survive and proliferate," Justice M Nagaprasanna noted in his order.

The petition was filed by Jonathan Sushil, Micah Mark, Ajit Mathai, Varghese Chacko, Bablu Kurmi and Supreme Joy, all accused in relation to the crime registered based on the communication issued by the ED on May 6. The allegation is that between Nov 2025 and April 2026, funds approximating Rs 92.5 crore (equivalent to $ 99,95,240) were allegedly utilised in contravention of statutory regulations.

Guj cos beat weak mkt with up to 58% HI gains

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Ahmedabad: Gujarat-based listed companies outperformed the Indian equity markets in the first six months of 2026, despite global uncertainty and volatility linked to the West Asia conflict. Several stocks posted double-digit gains, led by Adani Group companies, even as benchmark indices ended the period lower.

Since Jan, the BSE Sensex has fallen about 9.7%, while the NSE Nifty has declined 8.2%. Adani Power emerged as the top performer with a 58% gain over its Dec 31, 2025 closing price, followed by Adani Green Energy (51%), Adani Energy Solutions (47%), Adani Enterprises (40%), Adani Ports and SEZ (25.75%), Torrent Pharmaceuticals (25.5%), AIA Engineering (24%), Zydus Lifesciences (21.5%) and Gujarat Alkalies and Chemicals (21%).

Analysts attribute this to strong company execution, resilient domestic demand and investor preference for businesses with predictable earnings and healthy balance sheets. Infrastructure, energy transition and manufacturing companies – sectors where Gujarat has a significant corporate presence — also benefited from expectations of sustained capital expenditure and policy support.

The rally was not without interruptions. Many of these stocks came under pressure in March as the West Asia conflict escalated and crude oil prices rose, fuelling concerns over inflation, input costs and geopolitical risks. Sentiment improved after the ceasefire, triggering renewed buying across several Gujarat stocks.

Vanesh Panchal, a stockbroker and merchant banker, said, "Since late Feb, the Indian equity market has struggled amid the West Asia conflict, yet many Gujarat-based firms have delivered strong returns, outpacing the indices. Adani Group stocks, in particular, performed well, supported by attractive valuations. Several other Gujarat companies benefited as supply disruptions tightened availability and pushed up product prices, improving realisations."

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With love from the family.

OBITUARY

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENTS

OBITUARY

Sri. S GOPAL (96)

Fondly known as MRF Gopal attained the Lotus feet of Lord Rama on Monday the 29th June 2026 at his residence in Bangalore.

Deeply missed by Wife Geetha Gopal, Daughters, Sons -in- law & Grand children

Ct: 9845469854 / 7550283084

SAD DEMISE

SAD DEMISE

With deep sadness, we announce the passing of

Mohammed Anees

Son of Husnur Rahman and Najma Sultana
Husband of Tayiba Anees
Father of Shoaib and Simrah Alyaan
Brother of Shakaib and Aayesha Husna

Janazah Prayer Details:
Location: Khadria Masjid, Miller Road
on Thrusday July 2nd 2026
Time: After Zuhr Prayers (1:00 PM)

We kindly request you to pray for him and support the family during this difficult time.

SAD DEMISE

Advocate U R NAYAK

DOB 17/12/1955; DOD 30/06/2026

With profound grief and heavy heart, we share the sad news of the demise of Advocate UR Nayak. His integrity, wisdom and service to the legal fraternity will be remembered forever.

Last respect at No 736, 22nd Main, 13th Cross, JP Nagar 2nd phase Bangalore-78 from 8am to 9.30am Cremation at Banashankari Crematorium at 10.30 am Thursday, the 2nd July 2026.

Deeply mourned by Family, Friends and Relatives
Mobile: +91 99 00 580192

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In Loving Memory of

SMT. SHARDA BALI

(W/o Late Shri. G.R. Bali, Ex-CQAL)

(01 Nov.1947 - 30 June 2026)

Our beloved mother has departed for her heavenly journey. We sincerely request your prayers & wishes for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

FONDLY REMEBERED BY:

Mohit Bali,
Dr. Manish Bali,
Ritu Bali, Kamini Bali,
Prateek Bali,
Abhishek Kaushal,
Prerana Kaushal,
Rushil Bali,
Himank Bali & Family

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6 Days to 15 Days	8 Days to 17 Days	7 Days to 17 Days	7 Days to 17 Days	9 Days to 15 Days	EUHL-11D-Aug 20	EUPS 8 Days - Sept 24	EUGJ-9D-Oct 24	EUKA-5D-Nov 1, 15	Moscow Mongolia China-20D-Sept 19
110K-370K (J&L)	165K-370K (J&L)	200K-400K (J&L)	175K-300K (J&L)	390K-560K (J&L)	245K-255K (J&L)	215K-225K (J&L)	255K-265K (J&L)	80K-90K (J&L)	950000 (Ex-Mum)
169K-440K (Ex-Mum)	240K-435K (Ex-Mum)	270K-450K (Ex-Mum)	250K-475K (Ex-Mum)	495K-675K (Ex-Mum)	325K-335K (Ex-Mum)	290K-300K (Ex-Mum)	320K-330K (Ex-Mum)	115K-125K (Ex-Mum)	

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Europe - Western, Eastern, Northern, Mediterranean

Tour Name	J&L	Ex-Mumbai
Swiss Paris Austria Germany (6D)	110K-120K	175K-185K
European Splendours (10D)	210K-225K	275K-290K
European Highlights (11D)	245K-255K	325K-335K
European Wonders (13D)	275K-310K	340K-375K
European Jewels+Versailles (15D)	355K-370K	425K-440K
Best of Italy (8D)	225K-230K	295K-300K
Switzerland (7D/10D)	205K-295K	275K-360K
Best of France (11D)	255K-230K	325K-330K
Vienna Prague Budapest (8D)	165K-180K	240K-255K
Eastern & Central Europe (17D)	345K-360K	420K-435K
Uzbekistan Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan (9D)	170K-185K	225K-240K
Georgia Armenia (8D)	145K-160K	195K-210K
Best of Georgia (8D)	145K-160K	185K-200K
Tashkent Samarkand/ Bukhara (4D/7D)	54K-100K	89K-135K
Baltic Europe Estonia Latvia Lithuania (8D)	180K-190K	250K-260K
Baltic Europe with Berlin Warsaw Krakow (15D)	330K-350K	390K-410K

Tour Name	J&L	Ex-Mumbai
Highlights of Scandinavia (7D)	175K-200K	250K-275K
Best of Scandinavia (10D)	260K-275K	350K-365K
Scandinavia Russia (17D)	N/A	450K-475K
Scandinavia Northern Lights with Ice-Breaker Cruise (10D)	390K-410K	495K-510K
Iceland Northern Lights (9D)	400K-425K	490K-525K
Scandinavia Iceland Northern Lights + Ice-Breaker Cruise (15D)	545K-560K	650K-675K
Best of Russia (6D)	N/A	169K-179K
Spain Portugal (13D)	285K-300K	360K-375K
Spain Portugal Morocco (17D)	355K-370K	435K-450K
Best of Egypt (9D)	N/A	205K-220K
Egypt Greece Turkey (15D)	NA	475K-490K
Greece Turkey (12D)	315K-340K	385K-400K
Best of Turkey (10D)	160K-175K	225K-245K
Greece Athens Santorini Mykonos (7D)	200K-215K	270K-285K
Greece Athens Santorini Rhodes Mykonos (10D)	270K-285K	335K-350K
Tunisia Malta Sicily (10D)	N/A	385K-400K

South East Asia Far East Asia

Tour Name	J&L	Ex-Mumbai
Singapore Thailand Malaysia (10D)	150K-170K	185K-205K
Singapore Malaysia (7D)	129K-150K	159K-180K
Best of Singapore (5D)	106K-115K	129K-139K
Best of Bali (7D)	95K-115K	133K-153K
Phuket Krabi (4D)	59K-75K	89K-105K
Thailand (4D/6D)	40K-85K	65K-105K
Hong Kong Macao Shenzhen (7D)	150K-165K	190K-205K
Best of Vietnam (8D)	NA	140K-160K
Vietnam Sapa Phu Quoc (7D)	NA	145K-160K
Vietnam Cambodia (11D)	NA	215K-230K
Japan (9D/11D)	245K-330K	300K-375K
Japan (5D/7D/8D)	135K-210K	190K-265K
Japan Korea (10D)	295K-305K	350K-360K
China (7D/9D)	104K-155K	159K-205K
China Korea Taiwan (14D)	315K-325K	375K-385K
China Delight (9D) Oct 22	NA	225000
Korea Taiwan (8D)	240K-250K	300K-310K
Japan China (13D)	320K-330K	375K-385K

America Africa Australia NZ

Tour Name	J&L	Ex-Mumbai
Australia (7D/9D/15D)	160K-470K	235K-550K
New Zealand (10D/15D)	300K-460K	390K-550K
Australia New Zealand (11D/17D)	295K-540K	395K-640K
Best of Kenya (8D)	250K-265K	310K-325K
South Africa (9D/13D)	210K-220K	260K-400K
Best of Mauritius (6D)	105K-130K	150K-175K
USA East & West Coast with Chicago & National Parks (22D)	680K-705K	NA
USA California Carnival with Death Valley & Yosemite (10D)	325K-350K	NA
USA East Coast /Chicago(7D/9D)	230K-250K	NA
USA West Coast (7D)	230K-245K	NA
USA East+West+Chicago (9D)	235K-250K	NA
Canada Alaska (18D)	660K-685K	NA
USA with Boston Autumn Colours (11D)	320K-345K	NA
Antarctica (13D) Nov 28	1135000	1335000
South America (21D) Sept 26	1075000	1350000
Best of Brazil (8D)	425K-450K	NA

India Nepal Bhutan Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka (5D/7D)
Dubai Abu Dhabi (5D/7D)
Bhutan/Nepal (9D/8D)
Kashmir (6D)
Leh Ladakh (7D to 15D)
Nainital Mussoorie Haridwar Corbett Park (9D)
Himachal (6D/8D)
Rajasthan (4Dto17D)
Gujarat (7Dto17D)
Karnataka (6D/8D)
Keralam (5D/6D)

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S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER

For and on behalf of the President of India, the Chief Engineer (CON)/S, South Eastern Railway, Garden Reach, Kolkata-700043 invites E-tender for the following work. Following tender has been uploaded on website **www.ireps.gov.in**. The tender will be closed **at 12.00 hrs.** on due date. **e-Tender Notice No.: 4640-GRC-CE-C-SO-23-2026, Date: 30.06.2026. Brief Description of work:** Construction of Road Over Bridge, Approach Road, Quarters etc. in connection of Nimpura Reception Yard-Kharagpur 3rd line work under jurisdiction of Dy. CE/Con/II/ Kharagpur, South Eastern Railway, Kharagpur. **Approx. Cost:** ₹ 65.31 Crore. **Bid Security:** ₹ 1,30,61,300. **Completion Period:** 18 months. **Closing Date:** 28.07.2026. Interested tenderers may visit website **www.ireps.gov.in** for full details/description/specification of the tenders and submit their bids online. In no case manual tender for this item will be accepted. **N.B.:** Prospective bidders may regularly visit **www.ireps.gov.in** to participate in all other tenders. **(PR-401)**

34001/420/2627

E-mail ID:cebuildings_orissa@yahoo.co.in
cebuildings@rediffmail.com
Tel.-(0674)- 2391523

OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF (CIVIL), ODISHA
NIRMAN SOUDHA, UNIT-V, BHUBANESWAR
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)

File No.- B-I-Tourism-19/2026 23298 / Bhubaneswar, the 30th June, 2026

Invitation for Bids
1st Corrigendum

Tender Reference No. CE-Bldg-I-13/2026-27

Name of the Works : (1) "Construction of Kanhakund River Bank, Sundargarh District",
(2) "Additional Works for Construction of Mega Destination Tourist Spot for Maa Biraja and Baraha Keshetra at Jajpur"
(3) "Construction of new CHC (G+2) Building at Bhuban, Dhenkanal"

The following changes have been made in Bid Identification No. **CE-Bldg-I-13/2026-27**

1. Bid documents such as DTCN / BOQ etc. can be seen/ downloaded from the Govt. Website i.e. **www.tendersorissa.gov.in**, during the period from **dt.13.07.2026 to 17.00 hours of dt.28.07.2026** instead of dt.30.06.2026 to dt.15.07.2026 for ONLINE BIDDING respectively.
2. **Online** bids shall be received till **17.00 Hours of dt.28.07.2026** instead of dt.15.07.2026.
3. The technical bids will be opened at **11.30 A.M. of dt.29.07.2026** instead of dt.17.07.2026.

All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer, Buildings-I, Odisha, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-34001/34117/1/26-27/0037

11001/182/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Lokaseva Bhavan, Sachivalaya Marg, Bhubaneswar - 751001
Phone: 0674-2954600 | Website: https://dhe.odisha.gov.in | Mail: rusa.odisha@gmail.com

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Higher Education Department invites sealed tenders from eligible bidders for the following work: The complete set of bidding documents and other details are **available at https://dhe.odisha.gov.in .**

EMD Rs. 5,00,000/-

Last date for submission of bids: 23.07.2026 up to 4:00 PM
Opening of technical bids: 24.07.2026 at 4:00 PM

Sr. No.	Name of the Work	Tender No.	Tender Fee
1	Procurement, Supply, Installation & Commissioning of Laboratory Equipment & its accessories for Berhampur University, Ganjam under Regional Directorate of Education, Berhampur approved under PM-USHA	PM-USHA: 02/2026	Rs. 10,000/- + Applicable GST

Bids must be sent via Speed/Registered Post only to:
Joint Secretary to Govt. cum SPD (RUSA/ PM-USHA), Higher Education Dept., Lokaseva Bhavan, Bhubaneswar - 751001.

OIPR-11001/11001/1/26-27/0020

Sd/-
Joint Secretary-cum-SPD (PM-USHA)

KARNATAKA STATE MINERALS CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
Regd. Office : TTMC 'A' Block 5th Floor, BMTC Building, KH Road, Shanthinagar, Bengaluru-560027.
Phone: 080-22278813/14/15/16, Fax : 080-22213172
Website: https://ksmc.karnataka.gov.in

No. KSMCL/LEE/EPM/1/2026-27/969 **Date: 01.07.2026**

e-TENDER INVITATION

KSMCL invites e-Tender for selection of Contractor / Agency for Post of Environmental Monitoring & Compliance Report on Environmental Clearance and CFO Conditions for its Mines.

Calender of events

e-procurement Tender Reference No:	KSMCL/2026-27/SE0067.
Commencement to Download from website https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in	From 02.07.2026
Last date and time for tender queries/clarification	From 07.07.2026 up to 5.00 PM
Pre-bid meeting HO at KSMCL	From 13.07.2026 at 11.30 AM
Last date & time for receipts of Tender	From 24.07.2026 upto 5:00 PM
Date & time for opening of technical bid	28.07.2026 at 11:30 AM
Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs. 2,02,865/-
Address for communication	**General Manager (P)/(LEE) Karnataka State Minerals Corporation Limited** TTMC, "A" Block, 5th Floor, BMTC Building, K.H. Road, Shanthinagar, Bengaluru-560027. Phone: 080-22278813/ 14/15/16

The e-Tender document can be downloaded from e-procurement website: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in. Contact e-procurement helpdesk: 080-46010000 / 68948777, e-mail: support@eprochelpdesk.com

DIPR/CP/1425/AKAR/2026-27

Sd/-
Sd/- General Manager (P/LEE)

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

INVITATION FOR TENDERS (Through KPP Portal Only)

BWSSB invites tenders in two stage tender system from eligible contractors for the following works.

Sl. No.	Name of the Works	Amount put to Tender / EMD Amount
Office of The Engineer-In-Chief, 2nd Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bangalore - 560 009.		
IFT No.:BWSSB/EIC/ACE(CS&DCW)/1386/2026-27		**Date:01.07.2026**
1	Operation and Maintenance of Stage 1, 2, 3 Network Flow Meters coming under AEE(UFW) Sub Division.	Rs. 399.64 Lakhs / Rs. 5.99 Lakhs
IFT No.:BWSSB/EIC/ACE(CS&DCW)/1388/2026-27		**Date:01.07.2026**
2	Operation & Maintenance, Upgradation & Repair of D2B of Bulk Flow Meters coming under AEE(UFW) Sub Division.	Rs. 397.63 Lakhs / Rs. 5.96 Lakhs
IFT No.:BWSSB/EIC/ACE(CS&DCW)/1390/2026-27		**Date:01.07.2026**
3	Mordenization and Remodelling of Water Supply system and reduction in UFW in Pillanna Garden-2 (Richards Town) surrounding Area coming under AEE(UFW)-2 Sub Division.	Rs. 376.19 Lakhs / Rs. 5.38 Lakhs

For all the above works, Last date for receipt of tenders: **16.07.2026 upto 16:00 Hrs.** The bids will be opened on: **17.07.2026 at 16.30 Hrs.**

Sd/-
Engineer-In-Chief

The details regarding the tender and participatin in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the above signed office during working hours.

DIPR/CP/JA/1426/2026-27

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
STATE EXCISE DEPARTMENT
Office of the Excise Commissioner, 2nd Floor, TTMC 'A' Block, BMTC Building, Shanthinagar, Bengaluru-560027
email: ecexcise@gmail.com telephone: 080-22220302

File NO:EXCISE/e-Auction/02/2025 **Date:01-07-2026**

e-AUCTION NOTIFICATION

Excise Department invites bids from eligible bidders for Grant of Unused Excise Licences to Successful H-1 bidders in Form CL-2A and CL-9A for vend of Indian Liquor or Foreign Liquor or both, through e-Auction platform **https://www.mstcecommerce.com,** for the period of 05 Excise Years i.e., 2026–27 to 2030–31.

Government Notification No: FD 52 EFL 2025 Date:01.07.2026 containing detailed guidelines, terms and conditions regarding the e-Auction, District-wise licence details, reservation details, Application Fee, Earnest Money Deposit, Base Price and Post Auction details are available in the departmental website **https://stateexcise.karnataka.gov.in** and in the M.S.T.C. Limited portal **https://www.mstcecommerce.com.**

Schedule of eAuction is as under:

Particulars	Date
Starting of Registration of the bidders.	**03-07-2026**
Conducting training to the Prospective bidders and District e-Auction Nodal Officers.	**06-07-2026 to 14-07-2026**
Live Bidding.	**24-07-2026 to 31-07-2026**

Bidders are eligible to participate in the online Auction only after the Registration process is completed and the payment is confirmed online in their wallet. Hence, Bidders are advised to complete the registration process 48 hours before the start of auction of a particular slot in which they wish to participate. Bidders are advised to adhere to these advisories as a precautionary measure to avoid any delays in case of network and other technical issues.

However, Bidder can register two working days prior to the Scheduled e-Auction of respective slots (excluding Central/State Government Holidays.

Training Schedule issued by the Excise Commissioner will be published in Excise Department Website **https://stateexcise.karnataka.gov.in and MSTC e-Auction Portal https://www.mstcecommerce.com.**

Schedule of Live Bidding.

Date: 24-07-2026

SLOT-01 (10 AM-12 PM)		SLOT-02 (3 PM -5 PM)	
DISTRICT	**No. of LICENCES**	**DISTRICT**	**No. of LICENCES**
BUD-01	21	BUD-05	18
Bidar	11	Chickamagalur	12
Haveri	14	Kalburagi	15
Total	**46**	**Total**	**45**

Date: 27-07-2026

SLOT-01 (10 AM-12 PM)		SLOT-02 (3 PM -5 PM)	
DISTRICT	**No. of LICENCES**	**DISTRICT**	**No. of LICENCES**
BUD-02	28	BUD-06	26
Hassan	13	Shivamogga	17
Raichur	09	Yadgiri	06
Total	**50**	**Total**	**49**

Date: 28-07-2026

SLOT-01 (10 AM-12 PM)		SLOT-02 (3 PM -5 PM)	
DISTRICT	**No. of LICENCES**	**DISTRICT**	**No. of LICENCES**
BUD-3	25	BUD-7	22
Belagavi North	10	Ballary	12
Uttara Kannada	14	Bagalkote	08
Total	**49**	**Total**	**42**

Date: 29-07-2026

SLOT-01 (10 AM-12 PM)		SLOT-02 (3 PM -5 PM)	
DISTRICT	**No. of LICENCES**	**DISTRICT**	**No. of LICENCES**
BUD-4	13	BUD-8	33
Tumakuru	26	Chickballapura	11
Koppal	06	Mysuru Rural	14
Total	**45**	**Total**	**58**

Date: 30-07-2026

SLOT-01 (10 AM-12 PM)		SLOT-02 (3 PM -5 PM)	
DISTRICT	**No. of LICENCES**	**DISTRICT**	**No. of LICENCES**
Davanagere	12	Vijayapura	09
Vijayanagara	10	Chamrajanagara	07
Chitradurga	12	Dakshina Kannada	31
Mandya	15	Gadag	08
Total	**49**	**Total**	**55**

Date: 31-07-2026

SLOT-01 (10 AM-12 PM)		SLOT-02 (3 PM -5 PM)	
DISTRICT	**No. of LICENCES**	**DISTRICT**	**No. of LICENCES**
Kolar	15	Bengaluru Rural	11
Dharwad	19	Mysuru Urban	13
Kodagu	03	Bengaluru South	11
Belagavi South	11	Udupi	08
Total	**48**	**Total**	**43**

Dated : 01.07.2026

Sd/-
Excise Commissioner in Karnataka, Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/1432/Zen/2026-27

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN:U40109KA1999SGC025521)

No. CEE/T&P/SEE-1/2/2026-27/3155-84 **Date:30.06.2026**

BREIF TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Only)

KPTCL Invites Bids on electronic mode for the following works against following enquiry numbers **on Partial Turnkey basis.**

Sl. No.	Enquiry Nos. and Name of the works
1.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3935**
	Establishing 2X20MVA, **66/11kV** sub-station at **Kanchikere (Satturu)** with associated line for a distance of 2.996kms in Harapanahalli Taluk, Vijayanagar District.
2.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3690**
	Establishing 2x20MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at **Shivoor** along with construction of 110kV LILO line using Lynx conductor from the existing 110kV Afzalpura-Karajagi SC line to the proposed 110/11kV sub-station at Shivoor for a distance of about 9.982Kms in Afzalpur Taluk, Kalaburagi District.
3.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3684**
	Upgradation of existing 2x5MVA, 33/11kV to 2x20MVA, **110/11kV** sub-station at **Mallapur village (Shirur)** along with construction of 110kV LILO line for a distance of 2.290kms in Bagalkot Taluk and District.
4.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3929**
	Establishing 2x20MVA, **66/11kV** sub-station at **Rangasamudra (Madegowdana hundi)** by construction of proposed 66kV LILO line on 110kV DC towers using coyote conductor for a distance of 0.215kms in T Narasipura Taluk, Mysuru District
5.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3928**
	Establishing of 2x20MVA, **66/11kV** sub-station at **Belaghatta** and Construction of 66kV DC Line on MC/DC Towers from 220/66kV Chitradurga S/S to Proposed 66/11kV Belaghatta S/S by Utilizing Cross arm of existing MC Towers (up to Gunuru Limits) along with Replacement of existing Coyote Conductor by HPC of ampacity 700amps Conductor for a distance of 11.394kms and Construction of 66kV SC Link Line on MC/DC Towers from Proposed 66/11kV Belaghatta S/S to Link existing 66kV Chitradurga - Turununu SC Line for a distance of 0.210kms and Construction of 1No. of 66kV terminal bay at 220/66/11kV sub-station at Belaghatta in Chitradurga Taluk and District.
6.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3932**
	Establishing 2X20MVA, **66/11kV** sub-station at **Siddavvanadurga Village** with associated 66kV DC line for a distance of 10.702kms using Panther conductor by partially utilizing existing 220kV Davanagere-Chitrdurga SC line along with construction of 02 Nos. of 66kV Terminal Bays at ongoing 220/66/11kV Bharamasagara sub-station in Chitradurga Taluk and District.
7.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3938**
	Establishing 2x20 MVA, **66/11kV** sub-station at **Kadrimidri village** with associated 66kV,1000sqmm UG cable Double LILO for a distance of 1.30kms and 66kV DC line for a distance of 0.517kms in Chikkamagaluru taluk & District.
8.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3689**
	Establishing **2x20MVA,** 110/11kV sub-station at **Gholanoor** along with construction of 110kV LILO line using Lynx conductor from existing 110kV Afzalpur-Chowdapur SC line to the proposed 110/11kV s/s at Gholanoor for a distance of about 7.289kms in Afzalpur Taluk, Kalaburagi District.
9.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3685**
	a) Establishing 2X20 MVA, 66/11kV sub-station at **Agarabannihatti village** along with construction of 66kV LILO line for a distance of about 2.320 kms with High Performance Conductor (HPC) in Channagiri taluk, Davanagere district. **b)** Replacement of existing 66kV Benkikere- Devarahalli SC line having coyote conductor by HPC Conductor for distance of 15.680 kms from 220/66kV Benkikere sub-station to 66/11kV Devarahalli sub-station in Channagiri taluk, Davanagere district.
10.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3940**
	Establishing 2x20MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at **Belagal Thanda village** with associated line for a distance of 8.226 Km in Ballari Taluk, Ballari District.
11.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3927**
	Establishing 2x150 MVA, **220/66/11kV** and 1x12.5MVA, 66/11kV sub-station at **Dyagerahalli** in Sira Taluk, Tumakuru district along with construction of associated 66kV lines for a distance of 28.784kms along with construction of 2Nos. of 66kV Terminal Bays at Bevinahalli sub-station and 2Nos. of 66kV Terminal Bays at Ranganathpura sub-station.
12.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3943**
	Providing 2x150MVA, 220/66kV and 1x12.5MVA, 66/11kV Power Transformers at existing **220kV Ayyanahalli Switching Station** and construction of associated transmission lines for a distance of 220kV-0.49kms and 66kV– 40.755kms in H.B. Halli Taluk, Vijayanagara District along with construction of 02 Nos. of Terminal Bays in U.P.Halli sub-station, 01 No. of Terminal Bay in HB Halli sub-station, 01 No. of Terminal Bay in Venkatapura sub-station and 02 Nos. of Terminal Bays in Bachigondanahalli sub-station.
13.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3937**
	Establishing 2x20MVA, **66/11kV** sub-station at **G.Kodihalli** with associated line for a distance of 2.91kms in Hagari Bommanahalli Taluk, Vijayanagara District.
14.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3939**
	Establishing 2x20MVA, **66/11kV** sub-station at **Madalagere (Bandri Cross)** with associated line for a distance of 9.315kms in Harpanahalli Taluk, Vijayanagara District.
15.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3933**
	Establishing 2X20MVA, **110/11kV** sub-station at **Bhalki North** and Construction of 110kV LILO line for a distance of 1.701kms in Bhalki Taluk, Bidar District.
16.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3934**
	Combined Package of: **Work – A:** Establishing 1X20MVA, 110/33kV and 2X20MVA, **110/11kV** sub-station at Ahemadabad and Construction of 110kV LILO line for a distance of 0.237kms Bhalki Taluk, Bidar District. **Work – B:** Construction of 110kV LILO line to existing **110/11kV Nirna** sub-station from existing 110kV Manna-E-Khelli –Chincholli line for a distance of 1.406kms along with construction of terminal bays at 110kV Nirna sub-station in Humnabad Taluk, Bidar District.
17.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3942**
	Establishing 2x20MVA, **110/11kV** sub-station at **Dammur Village** and Construction of associated 110kV DC line for a distance of 11.408kms and 2nos of 110kV Terminal bays at existing 110kV Sirigeri Cross sub-station in Kurugodu Taluk, Ballari District.
18.	**KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3941**
	Establishing 2x20MVA, **66/11kV** sub-station at **Kodihalli** and construction of 66kV DC line on 110kV DC towers from ongoing 220/66/11kV Bharamasagara (Ajjappanahally) sub-station for a distance of 9.305Kms using Panther conductor along with Construction of 02 Nos. of 66kV terminal bays at ongoing 220/66/11kV Bharamasagara (Ajjappanahally) sub-station in Chitradurga Taluk & District.

The bids will be received through electronic tendering mode only. The details regarding participation in the e-tendering process can be obtained by logging on to KPTCL website **https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in** with hyperlink "E Procurement KPTCL" or **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** on or after **06.07.2026 @ 15:00hrs for the works mentioned at Sl.No. (1) to (7),** on or after **09.07.2026 @ 15:00hrs for the works mentioned at Sl.No. (8) to (12)** and on or after **13.07.2026 @ 15:00hrs for the works mentioned at Sl.No. (13) to (18).** Last date & time for receipt of Bids and **any extension of Due date for Bid submission will be intimated in the KPP portal.** Any details required in this regard can also be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours.

All Corrigendum/Addendums shall be noticed by the bidders before the last date of submission of the Bids.

Sd/- Chief Engineer(Elec), Tendering & Procurement,
9th Floor, Indhana Bhavan, KPTCL, A.R. Circle, Bengaluru-560 009.

BENGALURU EAST CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer, Horamavu Division,
Jayanthi Nagara Circle, Horamavu Main Road, Horamavu, Bengaluru-560113.

No.BECC/EE/HRM/TEND/03/2026-27 **Date: 01-07-2026**

Invitation for Tenders (Short Term) (Only through KPPP Portal)

Executive Engineer, Horamavu Division invites Item Rate tenders from eligible tenderers for the work details in the table given below. The Tenderers shall be registered in BECC/CPWD/KPWD/ Railways/MES/any State or Central Govt. organization. Tender documents may be downloaded from GoK e-Procurement website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/eportal/index.seam** under login for Contractors. for the works given in the table through KPP Portal.

Cost of Tender form is as per KPP Portal

Sl. No.	Name of the Works	Est. Cost (in Lakhs)	EMD (in Rs.)
01	Improvements to Roads & Drains at K.Narayanapura BDS Nagara in K.Narayanapura Ward No-01	25.00	50,000/-
02	Improvements to Roads & Drains at K.Narayanapura Village cross roads in K.Narayanapura Ward No-01	50.00	1,00,000/-
03	Improvements to Roads & Drains at Goddalahalli Village cross roads in K.Narayana pura Ward No-01	25.00	50,000/-
04	Improvements to Roads & Drains at Kothanuru Thimme Gowda Layout and surrounding Ward Area in K.Narayana pura Ward No-01	25.00	50,000/-
05	Improvements to Roads & Drains at Nageshwara Nagenahalli Kempegowda Layout, Regency park & Surrounding area in K.Narayanapura Ward No-01 (SC Reserved)	25.00	25,000/-
06	Improvements to Roads & Drains at Kyalasanahalli Gundapura Layout and surrounding Ward Area in Horamavu Ward No-02 (SC Reserved)	25.00	25,000/-
07	Improvements to Roads & Drains at Horamavugara Rajanna Layout and surrounding cross roads in Horamavu Ward No-2 (CAT-II(A) Reserved)	40.00	40,000/-
08	Improvements to Roads & Drains at Horamavu Chikkapillappa Layout and surrounding cross roads in Horamavu Ward No-2	40.00	80,000/-
09	Improvements to Roads & Drains at Horamavujayanthi nagara Venkataramanappa Layout and surrounding cross roads in Horamavu Ward No-2	45.00	90,000/-
10	Improvements to Roads & Drains at Vaddarapalya Agape Church surrounding area in Chelekere Ward No-03	70.00	1,40,000/-
11	Improvements to Roads & Drains at Vaddarapalya Sai Layout and surrounding Ward Area in Chelekere Ward No-03 (CAT-II(A) Reserved)	50.00	50,000/-
12	Construction of Guard Rooms and other works in Vaddarapalya Burial Ground in Chelekere Ward No-03	30.00	60,000/-
13	Improvements to Roads and Drains at Anjandri Layout and surrounding cross roads in Babusapalya Ward No-04 (CAT-II(A) Reserved)	45.00	45,000/-
14	Improvements to Roads and Drains at Babusapalya M.M. Garden and surrounding cross roads in Babusapalya Ward No-04 (CAT-II(A) Reserved)	40.00	40,000/-
15	Improvements to Roads and Drains at Ashirwada Layout and surrounding cross roads in Babusapalya Ward No- 04	40.00	80,000/-
16	Improvements to Roads and Drains at Panchamukhi Ganapathi Temple and surrounding area cross roads in Babusapalya Ward No-04 (SC Resrved)	25.00	25,000/-
17	Improvements to Roads and Drains at Hoysalanagara 3rd Main and Hoysalanagar surrounding cross roads in Hoysalanagara Ward No-05	50.00	50,000/-
18	Improvements to Roads and Drains at Vigneswara Layout and surrounding cross roads in Hoysalanagar Ward No-05	40.00	80,000/-
19	Improvements to Roads and Drains at Hoysalanagar Balaji Layout and surrounding cross Roads in Hoysalanagar Ward No-05	30.00	60,000/-
20	Improvements to Roads and Drains at Hoysalanagar Vinayaka Layout and surrounding cross roads in Hoysalanagara Ward No-05 (CAT-1 Reserved)	30.00	30,000/-
21	Engaging tipper tractor and labourers in K. Narayanapura Ward No-01 (ST Reserved)	35.00	35,000/-
22	Engaging tipper tractor and labourers in Horamavu Ward No-02	35.00	70,000/-
23	Engaging tipper tractor and labourers in Chelekre Ward No-03 (ST Reserved)	35.00	35,000/-
24	Engaging tipper tractor and labourers in Babusapalya Ward No-04	35.00	70,000/-
25	Engaging tipper tractor and labourers in Hoysalangara Ward No-05 (SC Reserved)	35.00	35,000/-
26	Filling of Patholes in K. Narayanapura Ward No-01	15.00	37,500/-
27	Filling of Patholes in Horamavu Ward No-02 (SC Reserved)	15.00	18,750/-
28	Filling of Patholes in Chelekere Ward No-03 (SC Reserved)	15.00	18,750/-
29	Filling of Patholes in Babusapalya Ward No-04	15.00	37,500/-
30	iFlling of Patholes in Hoysalanagara Ward No-05	15.00	37,500/-
31	Annual Maintenance of Footpath, Desilting of Drains and other allied works in K. Narayanapura Ward No-01	25.00	50,000/-
32	Annual Maintenance of Footpath, Desilting of Drains and other allied works in Horamavu Ward No-02	25.00	50,000/-
33	Annual Maintenance of Footpath, Desilting of Drains and other allied works in Chelekere Ward No-03	25.00	50,000/-
34	Annual Maintenance of Footpath, Desilting of Drains and other allied works in Babusaplaya Ward No-04	25.00	50,000/-
35	Annual Maintenance of Footpath, Desilting of Drains and other allied works in Hoysalangara Ward No-05 (CAT-II(A) Reserved)	25.00	25,000/-

Period of completion (each work): For Sl. No. 1 to 25: **06 Months.** For 26 to 35: **11 Months.**

Calendar of events:

1. Last date of submission queries: **06.07.2026 within 11.00 AM**
2. Date & time for Pre Bid Meeting: **06.07.2026 at 11.30 AM**
3. Last Date & Time for receipt of Tenders: **09.07.2026 up to 4.00 PM**
4. Date & time for Opening of Technical Bid: **10.07.2026 at 4.30 PM**
5. Date & time for Opening of Financial Bid: **13.07.2026 at 4.30 PM**
6. Validity of tenders: **180 Days.**

Bid document may be referred for other terms and conditions and any Corrigendum/ Addendum will be published & notified only through **http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** or Contract KPP Portal.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Horamavu Division, BECC

How rich must Indians be for India to be called developed?

BY INVITATION
Neelkanth Mishra

Over millennia, philosophers have struggled to clearly answer the question: 'who is rich?' A useful metric, easy to measure as well as compare, is income. The somewhat subjective factors that affect happiness (Good health? Freedom? Control of one's time? Leisure?) also correlate well with it: People in high income countries also tend to have more leisure and better health, for example.

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The most widely followed categorisation of countries is by the World Bank and uses a per capita nominal GDP threshold of $14,000 for high-income status. This was fixed at $6,000 in 1987 prices, and has risen at around 2% annually since then, broadly tracking developed-economy inflation. At least 85 countries (around 40% of those ranked) were classified high-income in 2024.

Per capita GDP is not a perfect measure. First, it ignores income distribution within a country. If income is concentrated in the hands of a few, even if the mean per capita income is high, many people would be poor. One can track median income, which is the middle-value when incomes are lined from smallest to largest. If there are too many poor and very few rich, the median would be lower than the mean. We note though that the gap between them tends to narrow significantly as economies become prosperous.

Second, consumption may better indicate material well-being and differs from income, as savings, the gap between income and consumption, vary between economies, and between the rich and the poor. Some researchers even adjust for leisure and life-expectancy to arrive at 'consumption-equivalent welfare'. However, this is hard to measure and compare accurately and frequently.

Third, purchasing power parity (PPP)-based per capita GDP is a better measure of welfare, as it adjusts for cost-of-living differences. For example, a haircut or a taxi ride would be much cheaper in India than in the US, even though they deliver similar value. Per capita GDP in the US is 29 times India's in nominal USD terms, but only seven times India's in PPP-adjusted terms. On nominal GDP per capita, India ranked 140 globally among 196 nations, versus 162 in 2005, and is expected to rank 134 by 2030. Its PPP-adjusted rank was 124 and expected to rise to 117 by 2030. Over time, though, these series converge.

Thus, a macroeconomic target based on per capita GDP, though not perfect, is the most appropriate.

India's move up the ranks over the past two decades has been among the most consistent globally, but China and Vietnam have moved faster. China was at India's 2025 per capita GDP in 2007 and ranked 123. It has moved up to 73 and is on the verge of high-income status with a per capita income nearly five times that of India. Vietnam was at our level in 2016 and is now ranked 122, with per capita GDP around 60% higher than India's.

Can India reach high-income status? And by when?

As chart 2 shows, to cross the high-income threshold by 2047, India must grow per capita GDP in USD terms by at least 9% annually, and GDP by 9.5%. If inflation averages 4%, and the rupee depreciates 2% annually against the USD, real growth needs to average 7.5% annually for the next 25 years.

While this is indeed India's current growth rate, as the economy moves towards the productivity frontier, growth will begin to taper: economies at the frontier grow less than 2.5% annually. Thus, growth must be faster over the next decade to compensate for the nearly inevitable slowdown in the 2040s.

How must one accelerate growth? It helps to view growth in GDP as coming from growth in labour input, in capital formation, and in productivity.

While labour input is linked to slow-changing-demographics, and cannot be changed quickly, India can and must lift its abysmally low female workforce participation in paid work. A large part of India's demographic dividend would otherwise be wasted. While weak demand for labour is a major challenge, improved law-and-order, regulations that ease part-time work, and focus on job-creation in sectors that are dominated by women globally are essential interventions.

The bulk of the acceleration in growth must come from faster capital formation. The starting conditions are in place, with a significant drop in the cost of capital, driven by the govt's fiscal discipline and the remarkable flow of household savings into equities (through systematic investment plans, and insurance and pension funds) worth nearly 2% of GDP annually. The significant expansion in financial system capacity to provide credit now needs channels to facilitate flows to where credit is needed, like to MSMEs, via frameworks like OCEN (open credit enablement network).

Policy must also prioritise easing real estate supply via regulatory changes and construction of urban infrastructure. Real estate and infrastructure form a major part of capital stock in developed economies — their construction creates demand for labour and materials and are an important driver of growth.

India must also maintain its current rapid pace of productivity improvement. Individual prosperity cannot be achieved without productivity growth.

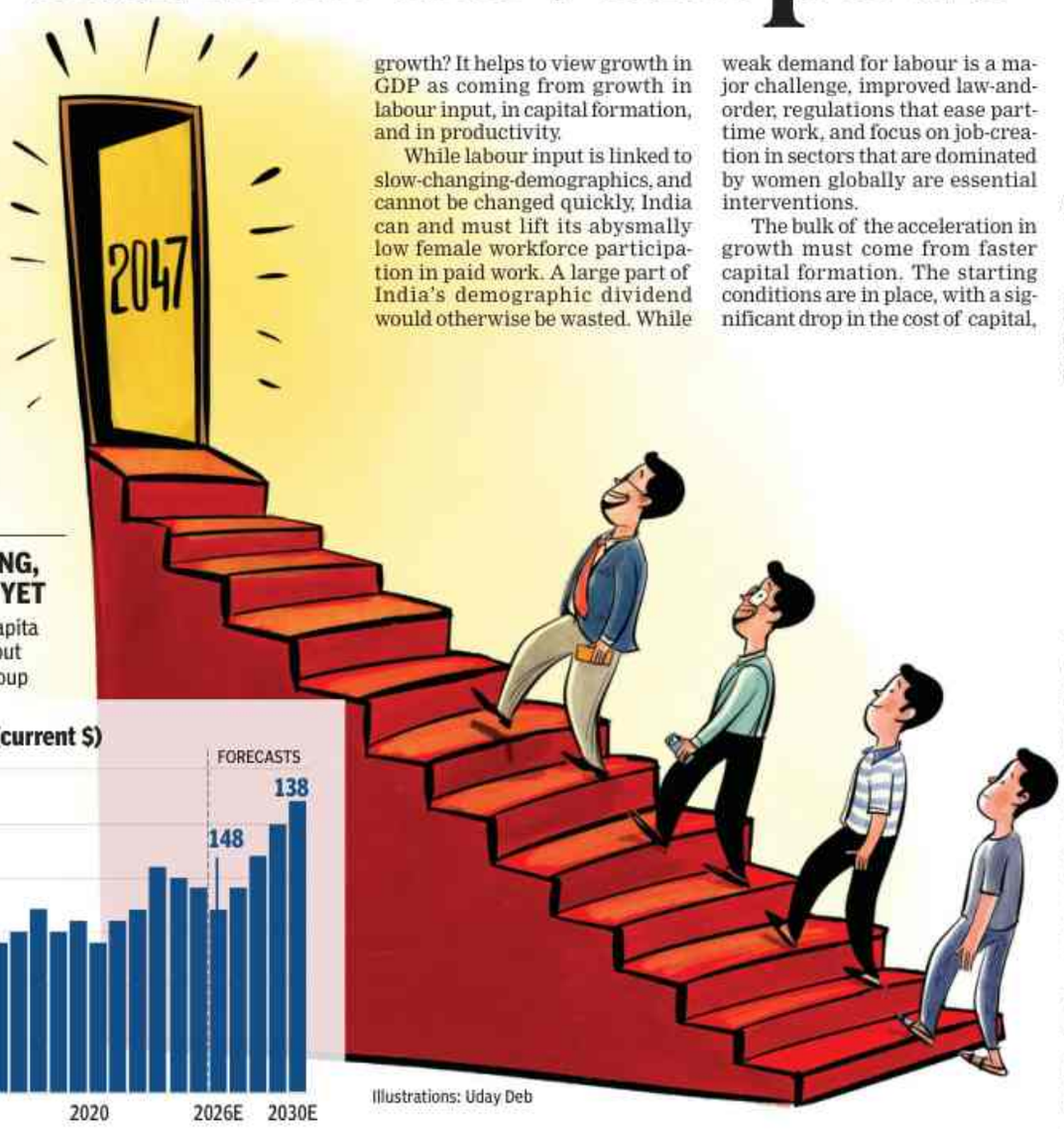
Among other requirements (like better health and education), this needs significant investments in science and technology. Unlike what Japan, Taiwan, Korea and even China saw while they grew, India cannot hope for an 'assisted' rise and instead must prepare for a 'resisted' rise, where it must develop its own critical technology. This is also important to prevent getting stuck in the middle-income trap, which has plagued many Latin American and eastern Europeans. Building a risk-capital and innovation ecosystem well in advance is important to make the transition from middle-income to high-income.

While new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics will improve productivity globally, we believe they can help India much more, by bringing down unit costs across a range of critical sectors, breaking through vicious cycles that slow progress.

Lastly, some of the societal shifts that Joel Mokyr emphasises in his book 'A Culture of Growth,' drove the industrial revolution in Britain, seem to be underway in India. Entrepreneurship is becoming socially respected and is now getting rewarded, the seeds of an innovation system are now falling in place, and the govt is beginning to see itself as a partner of business instead of viewing it with distrust.

If we focus relentlessly on building a high-trust society (enabled by a modernising judiciary), with higher risk appetite (not just for entrepreneurs and investors but also policymakers), a high-income India by the late 2040s is not an unachievable dream.

The writer is chief economist, Axis Bank

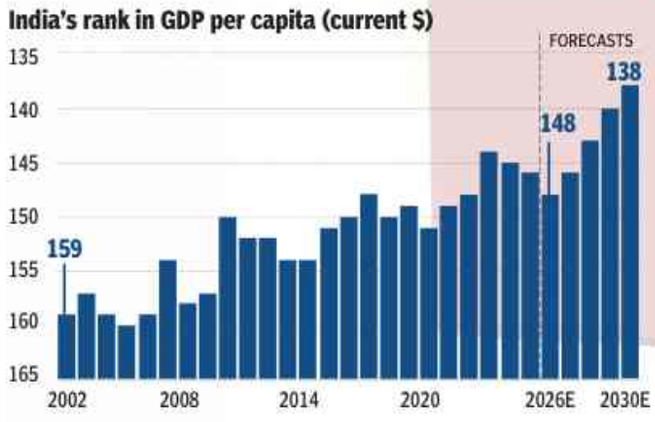


Illustrations: Uday Deb

1 INCOME RANK IMPROVING, BUT NOT FAST ENOUGH YET

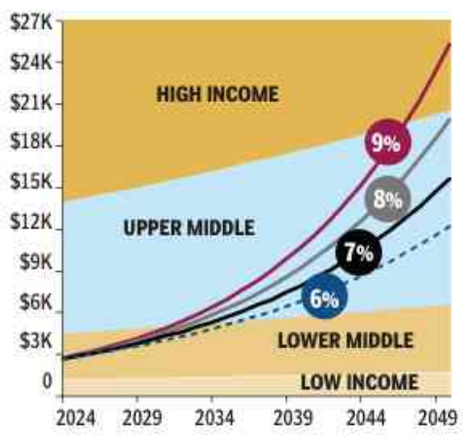
India has climbed in the global per capita GDP rankings since the early 2000s, but remains far from the high-income group

India's rank in GDP per capita (current $)



2 EVERY PERCENTAGE POINT OF GROWTH CHANGES INDIA'S DEVELOPED-COUNTRY DATE

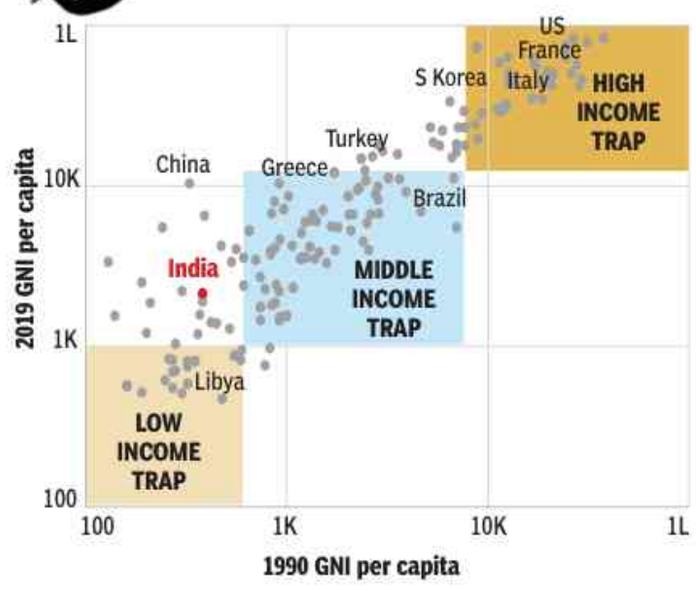
GDP per capita (CAGR)



To become a high-income country by 2047, India needs per capita dollar income to grow by about 9% a year. If that growth is 8%, 7% or 6% instead, India reaches the mark only around 2051, 2055 or 2062

3 HARDEST JUMP IS FROM MIDDLE INCOME TO HIGH INCOME

India's next challenge is not just to grow, but to avoid the middle-income trap that has slowed many countries before they became rich



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TIMES NATION

Probe has looked into alleged misuse of CCTV blind spots in Ayodhya case

▸ Continued from page 1

Following the disclosures, investigators are now reconstructing the movement of cash within the premises and are likely to question sanitation and maintenance workers responsible for the washrooms to verify whether they observed any suspicious activities or concealed packets of money. Police said the allegations would be corroborated through CCTV footage analysis, forensic evidence and witness testimonies. The probe has also focused on alleged misuse of CCTV blind spots. According to sources, while one accused allegedly removed cash from counted donations, others positioned themselves around him to obstruct the cameras' field of vision, concealing the alleged theft from surveillance.

During interrogation, Shukla also allegedly disclosed that one of the two keys to the highly secured donation-counting room remained with co-accused Ramshankar Yadav, alias Tinnu, though he had no role in counting cash, while the second key was held by bank officials supervising the counting process.

Police are preparing to question Tinnu, who is in judicial custody, to determine whether access to the key facilitated unauthorised entry into the counting room.

The financial trail is under intense scrutiny. Investigators are examining allegations that part of the allegedly embezzled money was invested in land, hostels and residential properties. Property records, bank transactions and other financial documents are being analysed.

Police sources said recoveries from the arrested accused have so far totalled Rs 79.8 lakh in cash, besides $1,121 and gold and silver jewellery.

The largest recovery was made from Avinash Shukla, from whose possession police claim to have seized Rs 20.4 lakh, $1,121, two gold chains, a gold ring, and a silver-coloured metal object. Other recoveries cited by investigators include: Karunesh Pandey (Rs 18 lakh), Anukalp Mishra (Rs 16.9 lakh), Lav Kush Mishra (Rs 14.3 lakh), Ramashankar Mishra (Rs 7.3 lakh), Manish Yadav (Rs 2 lakh) and Ramshankar Yadav, alias Tinnu (Rs 1 lakh), according to the police.

WhatsApp directed to furnish detailed explanation within 3 days

▸ Continued from page 1

The notice also flagged the possibility of identity spoofing through usernames resembling those of individuals, public authorities, financial institutions and govt agencies, raising concerns that fraudsters could exploit the feature to deceive users.

Citing Information Technology Act, 2000, and IT Rules, 2021, the notice asked Meta to explain "why regulatory action ought not to be initiated" for launching a feature that, in govt's view, "may increase cybercrimes".

It also reminded WhatsApp that as a "significant social media intermediary" it is bound by due diligence requirements under the IT Rules, including provisions related to impersonation, identity theft and tracing the first originator of messages where lawfully required.

WhatsApp has been directed to furnish a detailed explanation, supported by relevant documents, within three days of receiving the communication. The company has also been instructed not to launch the feature in India until consultations with govt are concluded "to the satisfaction of the govt".

Responding to the development, a WhatsApp spokesperson said the usernames feature has not yet gone live and will be rolled out gradually later this year.

The company said, "Users will still require a phone number to use WhatsApp and that usernames are designed to add another layer of privacy rather than replace existing account verification."

No cut in prices of domestic LPG cylinders, petrol and diesel

▸ Continued from page 1

Both commercial LPG and ATF are deregulated fuels, and their prices are revised on the first of every month in line with international benchmark rates.

The prices of domestic LPG cylinder and petrol and diesel are unlikely to come down anytime soon, as oil marketing companies (OMCs) continue to incur losses despite a fall in international crude prices. A senior OMC executive said they were still getting the crude booked at elevated prices during the conflict. The price of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder has been reduced by Rs 183.5 to Rs 2,930 in Delhi.

This is the first cut in commercial LPG prices since Dec last year, when the rates were reduced by Rs 10 per cylinder.

The 5-kg free trade LPG (FTL) cylinder, commonly used by migrant workers, roadside eateries and street vendors, has also become cheaper by Rs 13, and now, costs Rs 808.5. ATF for domestic airlines now costs about Rs 110 per litre.

The 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder, widely used by hotels, restaurants and industries, now costs Rs 2,884 in Mumbai, Rs 3,072 in Kolkata and Rs 3,099.5 in Chennai, with prices varying across states due to differences in value-added tax.

Industry insiders said the "minor" reduction in ATF prices was unlikely to lead to lower airfares. While none of the major airlines commented, sources said operating costs would remain high till the larger issue of airspace closures remains unresolved.

Tea Board India
(Under Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Dept. of Commerce, Govt. of India)
14, B.T.M Sarani (Brabourne Road), Kolkata- 700 001
Website : www.teaboard.gov.in e-mail: secretary.tbi-wb@gov.in
Phone No. +91 33 2235 1331

Tea Board India announces launching of NCVET approved skilled course on Tea Sommelier (Essentials of Tea Sommelier) at DTRDC, Kurseong, West Bengal.
For further details, please visit Tea Board website @ dtdrc.teamarketplace.in

Advertisement No.: 76/2026
Government of India
Public Enterprises Selection Board
invites applications for the post of
DIRECTOR (COMMERCIAL) IN ENGINEERS INDIA LIMITED (EIL)
Last date of submission of application by applicants is by **15:00 hours** on **22.07.2026**
Last date of forwarding of applications by the Nodal Officers to PESB is by **17:00 hours** on **31.07.2026**
For details login to website https://pesb.gov.in

महाराष्ट्र रेल इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर डेवलपमेंट कॉर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड
MAHARASHTRA RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED
(महाराष्ट्र शासन आणि रेल्वे मंत्रालय यांचा संयुक्त उपक्रम)
A Joint Venture of Govt. of Maharashtra and Ministry of Railways
२ रा मजला, हेक्स्ट हाऊस, नरीमन पॉईंट, मुंबई - ४०० ०२१
2nd Floor, Hoechst House, Nariman Point, Mumbai - 400 021
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR EMPANELMENT OF CIVIL CONTRACTORS
MRIDC has been entrusted with the mandate of planning, developing, and implementing critical infrastructure projects across the country, including railway lines, Road Over Bridges (ROBs), Road Under Bridges (RUBs), flyovers, cable-stayed bridges, station buildings, Rly. Staff Quarters and other infrastructure projects.
Accordingly, MRIDC is inviting Expression of Interest (EoI) / applications from interested Agencies for Empanelment / registration of Companies / Firms / Agencies as Civil Contractors for the work **"Construction of Road Over Bridges, Road Under Bridges and Limited Height Subways, Including Approaches, across Railway lines at various Level Crossing and Non-Level Crossing locations in the State of Maharashtra"**.
Interested Companies / Firms / Agencies may visit our official website **www.maharail.com** for the required Details / Information / Documents to be submitted to the CorporateOffice of MRIDC for the above-mentioned empanelment. Any corrigendum to this notice shall be hosted on our website only. Last date for receipt of Application / Document in the Corporate Office, Mumbai is **18.08.2026** before **15:00 hrs.**
Managing Director

NATIONAL BOARD OF EXAMINATIONS IN MEDICAL SCIENCES
(Autonomous body of the M/o. Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India)
NAMS Building, Medical Enclave, Ansari Nagar, New Delhi – 110029
NEET – PG 2026
NOTICE
National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) shall conduct the **NEET-PG 2026** on **30-08-2026.**
The online applications are being invited from **01-07-2026 to 21-07-2026** at NBEMS website:
https://natboard.edu.in/viewnbeexam?exam=neetpg
Candidates are advised to carefully read the Information Bulletin before applying and not to wait till the last date to complete the online application process. No request for acceptance of an application through any mode after closure of the prescribed application submission window shall be entertained by NBEMS.
Candidate Care Support: +91-7996165333
• Helpline Portal on applicant login page
• Communication Web Portal on NBEMS Website

Panel to seek states' input on demographic changes

Finalises Questionnaire, To Hold Interactions With Mins

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Union home minister Amit Shah directed home secretary Govind Mohan to extend all possible assistance, facilitation, resources to the panel for its day-to-day working and also its spot visits

New Delhi: Hitting the ground running, the high-level committee tasked with studying demographic changes in the country — in just about a month of its formation — has finalised a detailed questionnaire to seek relevant information from states and UTs.

The Justice (Retd) Prakash Prabhakar Navlekar-led committee — the mandate of which includes studying changes triggered by illegal immigration — informed home minister Amit Shah Wednesday about the questionnaire as well as its decision to visit states and UTs, which have witnessed a change in demographic patterns over the years, to gather first-hand, ground-level details from their respective govts and administrative machinery.

The panel will be holding interactions with various ministries to hear feedback on subjects and issues related to demographic changes. Shah, while appreciating the strategy prepared by the committee, directed home secretary Govind Mohan to extend all possible assistance, facilitation and resources to the panel for its day-to-day working.

He requested the panel to compile and submit its recommendations at the earliest. These recommendations, going by the committee's terms of reference notified in May, shall outline a permanent operational mechanism to identify, detain and deport illegal immigrants; an institutional system to strengthen border management and ensure population stabilisation; and a policy framework to enhance Centre-state coordination in matters related to illegal immigration and the resulting demographic imbalances.

Apart from Justice Navlekar, the committee includes the census commissioner, retired IAS officer Durga Shankar Mishra, ex-IPS officer Balaji Srivastava and economist Shamika Ravi. It was set up in May 2026, following up on a suggestion by PM Modi in his 2025 Independence-Day speech.

India asks Pak to provide consular access to 13 civil prisoners

New Delhi: India on Wednesday asked Pakistan to provide immediate consular access to the 13 civil prisoners in Pakistan's custody, who are believed to be Indian and have not been provided consular access so far, during the customary July 1 exchange of list of prisoners between the two sides.

India shared lists of 386 civil prisoners and 53 fishermen in its custody, who are Pakistani or believed to be Pakistani. Similarly, Pakistan shared lists of 52 civil prisoners and 198 fishermen in its custody, who are Indian. In addition, it said, India has urged Pakistan to ensure the safety, security and welfare of all Indian and believed-to-be-Indian prisoners, pending their release and repatriation to India. TNN

Nasal drop put into eyes at MP hospital, child loses vision

Amarjeet.Singh1
@timesofindia.com

Bhopal: More than a month after a 19-month-old boy allegedly lost vision in both eyes following treatment at a civil hospital in MP's Sagar district, a probe submitted Wednesday denied medical negligence in the case.

While the child's family alleged that a nasal drop was administered in place of an eye solution, the report by a three-member inquiry committee, submitted to the in-charge chief medical and health officer (CMHO), attributed the vision loss to severe malnutrition and Vitamin A deficiency.

The panel confirmed that the medicine administered was a nasal drop, but ruled that out as the cause of blindness.

The boy was taken to the hospital in Banda town on May 29 with complaints of cold and redness in his eyes.

His father said after purchasing medicines prescribed by the on-duty doctor from the hospital pharmacy, he returned to get them verified.

The father alleged that the doctor was busy on a phone call and asked him to put the drops into the child's eyes, without checking the bottle.

Moments later, the toddler started screaming in pain and his condition deteriorated. He was referred to the district hospital and later to AIIMS-Bhopal, but eventually lost vision in both eyes.

According to the inquiry report, however, the child was suffering from severe malnutrition and vitamin deficiency, which led to corneal ulcer — a condition that can result in blindness, if untreated.

Panel suggests NCERT be made nodal agency to align Class 11-12 syllabi with NEET

▸ Continued from page 1

Another significant proposal under consideration includes the one for giving school board performance "substantial weightage — up to 50%, suitably normalised — in admission/merit": a major shift from the current near-total dependence on entrance test scores for access to top professional and UG programmes.

The panel has linked any move to give board marks greater weightage with improving board-exam integrity to curb the phenomenon of inflated marking and excessive moderation, showing internal assessment and practical marks separately as grades.

The committee has suggested that NCERT be made the nodal agency for aligning Class 11-12 syllabi with JEE and NEET requirements and harmonise syllabus, pedagogy and evaluation "on a par as far as possible".

To reduce one-shot pressure, the panel, in its draft report under preparation, has recommended a multi-attempt framework, with exams "at least twice a year" and a gradual move towards on-demand testing. It has suggested increasing the number of JEE attempts from two to 3-4, scrapping the Dec-Jan JEE attempt to decongest the exam calendar and ensuring a clearer gap between Class 12 boards and entrance tests.

In the longer term, draft calls for moving towards "less-coachable, aptitude-oriented and adaptive CBT", with non-linguistic items where appropriate, while retaining subject-specific evaluation for STEM courses. The panel, however, has not argued for easier papers, noting that very easy tests could weaken ranking accuracy among lakhs competing for limited seats. It has also recommended psychometric analysis of NTA data by IIT-Kanpur to assess the "validity, reliability and discriminatory power" of JEE Main, JEE Advanced, NEET-UG and CUET. In a related recommendation, the panel has asked govt to examine "a comprehensive regulatory framework for coaching centres".

25001/600/2627

ଅତିରିକ୍ତ ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଯନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ
ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ ପାନୀୟଜଳ ଯୋଗାଣ ଓ ପରିମଳ ମଣ୍ଡଳ କୋରାପୁଟ

ଜି. ଏନ୍. କେ. ରୋଡ୍, ଫାୟାର ଷ୍ଟେସନ୍ ପାଖ
କୋରାପୁଟ, ପିନ୍ -୭୬୪୦୨୦

At- G.N.K Road, Fire station side
Koraput, Pin-764020
Email-acerwsskpt@gmail.com

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER
RURAL WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION CIRCLE, KORAPUT

Order No: 871 Dated: 16.06.2026

2ND CORRIGENDUM TO TENDER CALL NOTICE NO. 01/ACE/RWSS/KPT/2025-26/17.03.2026
CORRIGENDUM No. 01 Date: 26.3.2026

Due to some unavoidable administrative reasons, the tender invited vide tender notice no. **01/ACE/RWSS/KPT/2025-26/17.03.2026 dated 17.03.2026** for the work construction of new building for RWS&S Sub-Division & Section office Boipariguda under Boipariguda Block in the district of Koraput (CONSTN/789-SCP/796-TASP-0182-CONSTN OF BLDGS) is hereby cancelled with the approval of the competent authority.

Sd/-
Addl. Chief Engineer
RWS&S Circle, Koraput
OIPR-25001/25034/1/26-27/0003

In May, HC directed govt to impose blanket ban on cow slaughter

▸ Continued from page 1

On May 27, the HC, while hearing a PIL filed by K Surya Prasanth, the general secretary of Hindu Makkal Katchi, which sought direction to prevent the slaughtering of cows in public places, directed the govt to impose the blanket ban. The plea also sought directions that slaughter be carried out at designated places only. The HC order was based on a 1976 ruling, which prohibited cow slaughter in the interest of milk production and improvement of rural economy. In its plea, the state govt termed the order contrary to the Tamil Nadu Animal Preservation Act, 1958. The Act permits the slaughter of cows aged over 10 years that are unfit for work and breeding, on the basis of a certificate issued by a competent authority. The high court, however, imposed a blanket ban. AGENCIES

Woman killed by falling boulder, 35 roads blocked in Himachal

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kullu: Thirty-five roads, including two highways, were blocked and many areas faced power outages as monsoon advanced across Himachal Pradesh on Wednesday.

A 38-year-old woman was killed by a falling boulder in Mandi district, marking the season's first death. Sukhbir Kaur, a Solan resident, was travelling with her husband and their child to Manikaran when she felt unwell near Aut. As soon as she stepped out of the car, a boulder came crashing down from the hillside and struck her. Her family rushed her to a hospital 10km away, where doctors declared her dead.

Hundreds of tourists were trapped all night on Manali-Leh highway after a flashflood in Jispa in Lahaul & Spiti. BRO started road clearance work after the water flow subsided and the highway was reopened Wednesday.

Shimla-Mataur highway (NH-205) was also closed to traffic Wednesday after heavy rain triggered a landslide near Bhararighat. Landslides were reported at a few spots on Chandigarh-Shimla highway as well but traffic was not affected. According to state emergency operation centre, 18 roads were blocked in Kullu district and 11 in Mandi. Shimla Meteorological Centre has forecast heavy rainfall on Thursday-Friday. Most parts of Himachal are likely to receive below-normal rainfall and witness warmer than usual temperatures in July. Parts of Chamba and Kullu are likely to receive near-normal rainfall, and some areas of Lahaul & Spiti district may even record above-normal rain during the month.

PTI

NATURE'S FURY: BRO personnel use excavators to clear debris from Manali-Leh Highway near Jispa after a cloudburst triggered flash floods, in Lahaul and Spiti district, Himachal Pradesh on Wednesday

Government of Karnataka
Office of the Executive Engineer,
Public Works Department Division, Haveri

This office letter No.033/PB/Tnd/8443-5054-4059/2026-27/1322/ Dated : 30-06-2026

E-Tender Notification

On 30-06-2026 through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal tender notification has been issued for the following Work Indent No. 35506/Call-2 Last date for submission of tender receipt is assigned on Dated : **23-07-2026** (upto 4:00 PM), Work Indent No. 36502, 37095, 31307/Call-3, 36309, 36513 & 35862 Last date for submission of tender receipt is assigned on Dated : **20-07-2026** (upto 4:00 PM) and Work Indent No. Sl No. 7 to 21 and 23 to 27 Last date for submission of tender receipt is assigned on Dated : **27-07-2026** (upto 4:00 PM). For further additional information, any changes & queries visit https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.

Sd/- (N.N.Patil)
Executive Engineer, PWD Division, Haveri
DIPR/Haveri/196/KSMCA/2026-27

BENGALURU WEST CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer, Special Division, R.R. Nagara Zone-1, No. 301, 2nd Floor, Near BEML Complex, 3rd Stage, BEML Layout, Rajarajeshwari Nagara, Bengaluru-560098

No.: BWCC/EE(SD)/RRNZ-1/TEND/02/2026-27 Date: 01.07.2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Two Cover System) (Through GOK KPP Portal only)

The Executive Engineer, Special Division, R R Nagara Zone-1, invites tender from eligible bidders for the work detailed in the table below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Service
1	Providing Engineer Graduate / Diploma in Engineering Employee in civil Engineering to Bengaluru West City Corporation, R R Nagara Zone-1. **EMD in Rs.: 3,84,000/-**

Calendar of Events: (1) Tender documents may be downloaded from the KPP Portal of Government of Karnataka from **03.07.2026** onwards. **(2)** Last date & time for tender queries: **04.07.2026** upto **4:00 p.m. (3)** Last date for submission of tender document: **10.07.2026** upto **5:00 p.m. (4)** Opening of Technical bid: **13.07.2026** at **11:00 a.m. (5)** Opening of Financial bid: **will be intimated to the Technically qualified bidders.** Further details may be obtained from the above office, during office hours or website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.**

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Special Division, R.R. Nagara Zone-1, Bengaluru West City Corporation

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT,
DAVANAGERE DIVISION, DAVANAGERE.

No.EE:PWD:Dvg/JE:IFT-09:2026-27 Dated:- 30.06.2026

SHOR TERM E-TENDER NOTIFICATION

Ref : This office tender notification No. IFT-09/2026-27 dated : 30.06.2026.

The works under Head of Account 5054-80-190-0-01-132 KRDCL 1 Work Rs. 450.00 lakhs, & Head of Account 4059-80-051-0-60-422 CMIDP SCP 2 works Rs. 100.00 lakhs, pertaining to Davanagere and Channagiri sub divisions under the Jurisdiction of PWD, Davanagere division, has been called for the tenders from registered Contractors in KPWD for the above works through KPP Portal as per standard tender documents rules. Tender dates are as mentioned below:

Details of dates	W.I 35931	W.I. 36919 & 36456
Last Date & time for tender queries	Date 03.07.2026 Timing 4.00 P.M.	Date 01.07.2026 Timing 4.00 P.M.
Prebid meeting held : office of Executive enginner, PWD division, avanagere.	Date : 04.07.2026 Timing 11.00 A.M.	-
Last Date & time for receipt of tenders	Date : 17.07.2026 Timing 4.00 P.M.	Date : 15.07.2026 Timing 4.00 P.M.
Date & time for opening of Technical Bid :	Date : 18.07.2026 Timing 4.30 P.M.	Date : 16.07.2026 Timing 4.30 P.M.

Further details can be obtained from this office in office hours.

DIPR/DVG/KSMCA/186/2026-27

Sd/- Executive Engineer PWD, Davanagere.

1001/89/2627

Website: ouat.ac.in
Email-registrar@ouat.ac.in
registrarouat@gmail.com
Ph - 0674-2397818/919
Fax - 0674-2397424

2026 ଓଡ଼ିଶା କୃଷି ଓ ବୈଷୟିକ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ,ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର,ଓଡ଼ିଶା
ODISHA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE & TECHNOLOGY
Bhubaneswar-751003, Odisha

No. CT(T)-0003/2025-**9890** / UAT, dated. 1st July, 2026

CORRIGENDUM TENDER NOTICE

In continuation to the Tender Notice No. 8509/UAT, dtd. 12.06.2026, the corrigendum on Revised/ Rescheduled dates involved in the process of Tender and Rectification of the terms and conditions of Tender Paper for providing manpower to OUAT on Out-Sourcing basis both in the Category of A & B is uploaded in the official website of OUAT **www.ouat.ac.in** for further detailed information.

The last date for submission of tender documents is **08.07.2026 by 5.00 P.M.**

Sd/-
REGISTRAR
OIPR-1001/1533/1/26-27/0007

25001/595/2627 e-mail:- serw_ctc@yahoo.com

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, CUTTACK

No. Tender Online RWC -10/26 Letter No.- 3065 Date: 24.06.26

e-Procurement NOTICE

1. **Name of the work** : Construction of **Building & Road** works.
2. **Class of contractor**
   c) Estimated cost more than Rs.6.00 Crore & upto Rs.50.00 Crore : Special Class (of Odisha PWD) & relevant class of other licensing authorities.
   d) Estimated cost more than Rs.1.00 Crore & upto Rs.20.00 Crore : A Class (of Odisha PWD) & relevant class of other licensing authorities.
   c) Estimated cost more than Rs. 20.00 Lakh & upto Rs.3.00 Crore : B Class (of Odisha PWD) & relevant class of other licensing authorities.
3. **Time for Completion** : As specified in the **Column-7 of the Annexure.**
4. **Detail Projects** : **As per Annexure attached**
5. **Other Details**

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Cuttack	Tender Online RWC-10/26	Tender Online RWC-10/26	03.07.2026 at 11.30 A.M.	23.07.2026 up to 05.00 P.M.	23.07.2026 at 02.00 P.M.	Will be intimated later

Further details can be seen from the website **www.tendersodisha.gov.in**

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
Rural Works Circle, Cuttack
OIPR-25001/25097/1/26-27/0008

Govt. of Bihar
GOVERNOR'S SECRETARIAT
BIHAR LOK BHAVAN, PATNA-800022

CORRIGENDUM TO ADVERTISEMENT

Regarding Invitation of Applications for appointment of Pro-Vice-Chancellors in the Select Universities of Bihar.

With reference to the **Advertisement No. PR_004719/26-27 dated 02.06.2026** and the **Addendum No. PR_004911/26-27 dated 04.06.2026**, inviting applications for appointment to the post of **Pro-Vice Chancellor** in the following fourteen (14) State Universities of Bihar:

1. Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Bihar University, Muzaffarpur (BRABU)
2. Bhupendra Narayan Mandal University, Madhepura (BNMU)
3. Jai Prakash University, Chapra (JPU)
4. Kameshwar Singh Darbhanga Sanskrit University, Darbhanga (KSDSU)
5. Lalit Narayan Mithila University, Darbhanga (LNMU)
6. Magadh University, Bodh Gaya
7. Maulana Mazharul Haque Arabic and Persian University, Patna (MMHAPU)
8. Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University, Bhagalpur (TMBU)
9. Veer Kunwar Singh University, Ara (VKSU)
10. Patliputra University, Patna (PPU)
11. Munger University, Munger
12. Purnea University, Purnea
13. Patna University, Patna
14. Nalanda Open University, Patna (NOU)

It is hereby notified that the last date for submission of online applications is extended up to 21st July, 2026 (11:59 P.M.).

All other terms and conditions contained in the aforesaid Advertisement and Addendum shall remain **unchanged**.

It is further clarified that applications received after the extended last date and time, or applications found to be incomplete in any respect, shall not be entertained or considered.

By Order of the Chancellor

(Dipak Kumar Singh)
Additional Chief Secretary to
The Hon'ble Governor-cum-Chancellor

PR- 006892 (Governor Secretariat) 2026-27 नशे की मार, बर्बाद करे सुखी परिवार।

2 girls wading through flooded road suffer electric shocks

George Mendonca

Navi Mumbai: Two college girls fell unconscious after sustaining severe electric shocks from an underground exposed live electrical wire while wading through a waterlogged stretch of the Mumbai carriageway of the Sion-Panvel Highway near the Nerul flyover around 1 pm on Wednesday. The two were rushed to Dr D Y Patil Hospital in Nerul by an autorickshaw driver waiting at the traffic signal nearby, who used his presence of mind to pull them out with a tree branch.

The girls have been identified as Ujwala Wagh, 18 , and Shubhangi Nalawade, 16 , both residents of Shirawane village, Nerul, and students of People's Education Society High School and Junior College in Sector 8B, CBD-Belapur. After alighting at the bus stop near a sweet shop on the highway, they were wading through the flooded highway while holding hands to reach the pavement when the incident took place.

At the hospital, the two were immediately provided treatment and stabilised by the doctors. After they regained consciousness, NMMC Mayor Sujata Patil met the girls at the hospital to check on their health condition. According to the directions of Mayor Sujata Patil, the girls were shifted to ICU for observation.

Fall of trees not in human hands, says Sena min, then clarifies

Mumbai: Shiv Sena minister **Sanjay Shirsat** has kicked up a row by saying falling of trees and lightning strikes are not in human hands. The comment came in the wake of the death of a student after a tree collapsed on a school bus in Chembur.

A day after he made the remarks, the social justice minister on Wednesday sought to control the damage, claiming that he had been misquoted and that the civic body should have ensured proper trimming of trees in advance to prevent such incidents.

Asked about the incident, Shirsat on Tuesday said, "How was one to know that the tree was going to fall? Falling of a tree or lightning is not in our hands. Maybe there were heavy winds."

His comments drew sharp reactions from the Congress and NCP (SP). Congress' Nana Patole said the remarks show "the level of arrogance" within the govt. "Monsoon preparedness was only on paper, there was nothing on the ground," Patole said. NCP (SP)'s Clyde Crasto dubbed Shirsat's remarks as "shameful" and "insensitive." PTI

Flash floods cut off villages in Doda; J&K halts two pilgrimages

Jammu: Heavy rains triggered flash floods in Kalalgisar area of Bhalessa, in J&K's Doda district, Wednesday. Mud and debris flows blocked several interior link roads, severing connectivity to multiple villages in the belt. Restoration work began after the situation improved later in the day, officials said.

Meanwhile, inclement weather forced authorities to suspend the ongoing annual pilgrimages to Machhail Mata and Mindhal Mata shrines — which commenced on June 1 — in the mountainous Kishtwar district. Officials said the decision was taken to ensure the safety of pilgrims in view of incessant rainfall, slippery roads and the risk of shooting stones.

Kishtwar administration, in an official advisory, urged devotees not to undertake the pilgrimages and to remain at home or other safe locations until further notice. Thursday's yatras were also subject to fair weather conditions, it stated. Doda district administration urged residents to avoid unnecessary travel in vulnerable areas and adhere to official advisories rather than relying on unverified social media posts — including reports of cloudbursts and other calamities — until connectivity was completely restored. TNN

New EPFO scheme implements changes related to withdrawals

▸ Continued from page 1

The provision regarding coverage, however, remains unchanged as the new scheme provides continuity of membership by specifically stating that employees who were members under the earlier scheme will continue as members.

The new scheme also implements the changes related to withdrawals, which were approved by the Central Board of Trustees last Oct. These changes include increasing the number of withdrawals that can be made in a year and streamlining the categories for drawing out advance funds, from 13 to just three — essential needs (illness, education, marriage); housing needs; and special circumstances.

EPFO has also approved advance withdrawal up to 100% of the 'eligible balance' in the PF, including employee and employer share, with members now required to always maintain 25% of the contributions in their accounts as the minimum balance.

For contract workers, the new scheme specifies the definition of "principal employer" and puts the onus of ensuring PF contributions for contractual staff on them.

The new scheme also introduces several provisions on compliance requirements/filings to be done by the employer, including one-time, monthly and event-based compliances. Every employer is now required to file a consolidated return (in Form V) within 15 days of application of the scheme, giving prescribed details of all employees, including their Aadhaar, Permanent Account Number (PAN), Universal Account Number (UAN), gross wages and EPF wages.

Along with the EPF Scheme 2026, govt has also notified three special drives intended to regularise historical compliance gaps and resolve long-pending issues. The AMNESTY scheme, operational till Dec 31, will provide a framework to regularise historical compliance issues for organisations operating income tax -recognised PF trusts.

VISHWAS campaign till Dec 31 will provide reduced rate of damages (1% per month, for default more than four months) for ongoing damages litigation cases, while the Employees' Enrolment Campaign, in operation till Oct 31, will promote enrolment of eligible employers and/or employees who may not have been covered under the PF Scheme previously.

TIMES BUSINESS

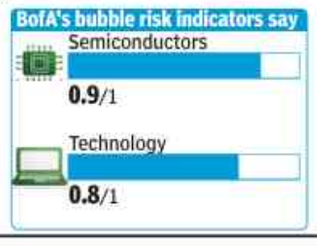
THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | THURSDAY, JULY 2, 2026

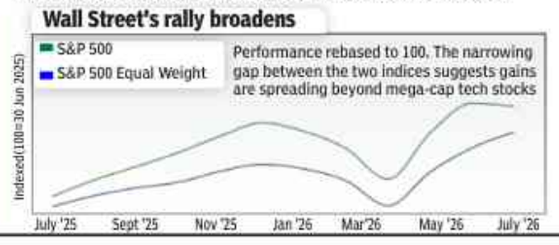
Bubble fears cloud Wall Street's AI rally

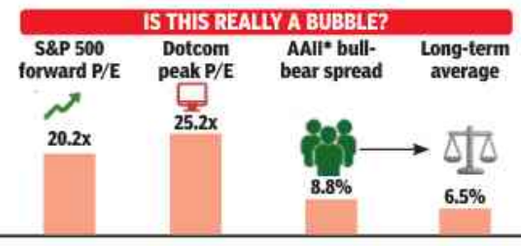
Bubble concerns persist as AI-led stocks remain expensive, though **healthy earnings and improving market breadth** continue to support the bull market

WHY ARE BUBBLE FEARS GROWING?

1. **Buffett Indicator: >218%**
It compares total US stock market value with GDP; readings above 100% generally signal expensive valuations
2. **S&P 500 price-to-sales ratio: 3.2** versus long-term average of **1.8**







What's keeping bulls in the game?

- Earnings remain resilient despite lofty valuations
- Investor sentiment is bullish but well below euphoric levels
- Rally is broadening beyond a handful of mega-cap tech stocks

*American Association of Individual Investors
Source: Reuters, S&P Global, Nasdaq

Rupee falls 59p for sharpest drop in 3 wks, closes at 95.25

Mumbai: The rupee weakened to close at 95.25 per dollar on Wednesday, down 59 paise from Monday's close of 94.66, marking its sharpest one-day fall since June 8 and slipping to a near three-week low amid weakness in Asian currencies and cautious global sentiment. The decline tracked broader emerging market trends, with the MSCI Emerging Market Currency Index falling 0.2% and remaining largely unchanged for 2026. TNN

HSBC signs pact for 1.2mn sq ft B'luru campus

Bengaluru: HSBC has signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with Prestige Group to develop a 1.2-million sq ft campus in Bengaluru. Once completed, it will be among the bank's largest campuses globally, underscoring its long-term commitment to India. "India is one of the world's most important talent centres and continues to be a key market for HSBC. Bringing our colleagues together on one campus will help us move faster, collaborate more closely, and continue developing expertise and talent to provide the best support for our customers," said Georges Elhedery, group CEO of HSBC. TNN

Merck consolidates India ops into Bengaluru GCC

Bengaluru: Merck has opened its integrated Global Capability Centre (MGCC) in Bengaluru, bringing its existing India technology and services operations under one roof. The campus will house around 3,300 professionals across the company's data, digital, process and technology functions, strengthening collaboration and accelerating innovation across its global businesses. Digital Enterprise Solutions (DES), Merck's technology organisation that integrates data, digital and process capabilities into a unified digital enterprise, is at the centre of the new facility. "The centre (MGCC) is much more than an operational hub — it is a strategic engine for our digital enterprise," said Alessandro De Luca, head of DES and group CIO at Merck. TNN

At 14%, GST collections in June grow fastest in 8 mths

Mop-Up From Imports Key Driver | Refunds Increase 29%

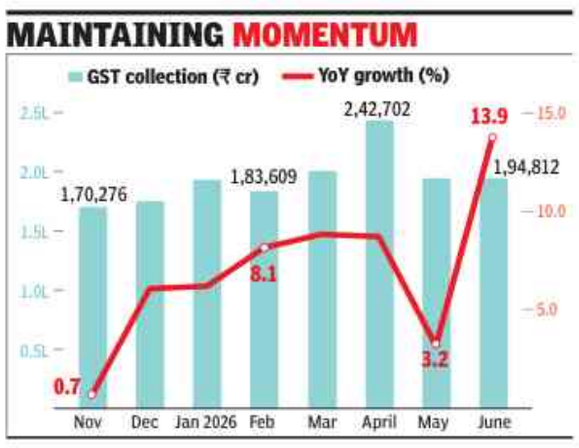
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: GST collections rose 13.9%, fastest pace in eight months, to Rs 1,94,812 crore on sharp growth in the mop-up from imports due to a spike in international prices of crude, fertiliser and other commodities.

Latest data showed that in June, for transactions undertaken in May, IGST on imports shot up nearly 35% to over Rs 60,000 crore, while the collection from domestic sources was estimated to have gone up 6.5% to Rs 1,34,774 crore.

Within that, state GST was further muted, registering a rise of 4.3% to Rs 45,116 crore, while central GST went up 8.2% to Rs 37,376 crore.

Among states, Jharkhand was the worst performing with collections crashing 43%, followed by Chhattisgarh (down 18%) and Tripura (-14%). In contrast, Gujarat topped the growth charts, reporting a 27% increase, with Meghalaya (22%) and Goa (19%) coming in next.



After factoring in refunds – which shot up 29% to Rs 32,436 crore – net collections were estimated to have gone up 11.2% to Rs 1,62,377 crore.

"A key contributor to this month's performance has been the growth in net GST collections from imports. This suggests increase in import of raw materials and intermediate goods, reflecting sustained manufacturing activity and continued momentum behind govt's 'Make in India' initiative. The net domestic GST collections underscore the resilience of domestic economic activity," said Mahesh Jaising, indirect tax leader at consulting firm Deloitte.

"Data shows that consumption remains robust even under structural adjustments; and also challenges such as ITC accumulation on input services under the inverted duty structure, something the GST Council is expected to address in the July 2026 meeting in Kolkata," added Vivek Jalan, partner, Tax Connect Advisory Services.

There was also a word of caution. "The rising share of collections from imports warrants closer structural analysis. To mitigate this reliance and further catalyse domestic capacity, there is a compelling case for policy recalibration—specifically by redeploying unutilised outlays from the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes to strategically aggressively attract and scale high-value manufacturing within India," said Saurabh Agarwal, tax partner at EY India.

FPIs' $5bn bond purchase offsets steady equity sales

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Foreign portfolio investors turned net buyers in June after months of sustained outflows, as a surge in sovereign debt inflows offset continued equity selling and pushed overall flows into positive territory.

According to data, June recorded net inflows of $531 million, marking the first positive monthly print after a prolonged phase of withdrawals. This was despite net sales of $5.2 billion worth equity during the month.

The bulk of the capital gravitated toward the debt-general limit segment, which captured a significant $3.2 billion net inflows. This was closely supported by the fully accessible route (FAR), which pulled in $2.2 billion, reflecting robust international appetite for uncapped, designated govt securities structured for global bond index inclusion. Meanwhile, the voluntary retention route (VRR)—a specialised channel granting operational flexibility in exchange for committing capital over a fixed retention period—recorded a more modest but positive net inflow of $341 million. Collectively, these three streams propelled the total debt inflows to a substantial $5.8 billion.

Net Inflows Of $531 Mn After Long Outflow Spell

Monthly FPI Net Investments

Calendar Year '26	Equity ($Bn)	Debt Total* ($Bn)
January	-4	0.7
February	2.5	2.1
March	-12.7	-0.9
April	-6.5	-1.2
May	-3.5	0.3
June	-5.2	5.8
July **	-0.2	0.2
Total - 2026	**-29.5**	**7**

*Contains Debt - General Limit, VRR, and FAR | ** up to 01 Jul 2026 | Source: Sebi/Depositories

Car sales in June signal strong demand recovery

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New Delhi: India's passenger vehicle industry ended the first quarter of FY27 on a strong footing, with most major automakers reporting healthy year-on-year growth in June, reflecting resilient consumer demand for SUVs and electric vehicles, despite supply disruptions at select manufacturers.

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles emerged as the biggest gainer among leading carmakers, reporting sales of 63,083 cars and SUVs in June, up 69% from a year earlier. The company also recorded its highest-ever monthly EV sales of 14,800 units, nearly three-times last year's figure, helping quarterly passenger vehicle sales climb 46% to 1,82,574 units. Tata attributed the growth to strong demand for refreshed Tiago and Punch, while noting that supply constraints affecting Sierra production are expected to ease during the current quarter. Market leader Maruti Suzuki retained its dominance in volumes, posting total sales of 200,390 units in June, up 19.3% year-on-year. Domestic passenger vehicle sales rose 23.8% to 1,47,187 units, driven by sustained demand for utility vehicles, while exports increased 13%. Mahindra & Mahindra also delivered another strong month, with overall vehicle sales, including exports, rising 37% to 106,207 units. Domestic utility vehicle sales grew to 60,393 units from 47,306 a year ago, while total SUV sales, including exports, reached 61,504 units. Exports more than doubled to 5,918 units, highlighting continued traction in overseas markets.

PE-VC deal value dips 5% in H1 CY2026

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Chennai: Private equity and venture capital (PE-VC) investments fell 5% YoY during the Jan-June period of CY2026 to $17.5 billion, compared with $18.4 billion in the corresponding period of CY2025. PE-VC investments, excluding those in the real estate sector, remained flat at $1.9 billion in June 2026, according to data released by research firm Venture Intelligence on Wednesday.

Late-stage companies (those more than 10 years old or raising Series G or later rounds of institutional funding) continued to account for the largest share of investments during the period at $4.2 billion, followed by growth-stage and early-stage companies at $3.4 billion and $1.9 billion, respectively. Arun Natarajan, founder of Venture Intelligence, said PE-VC investments held up reasonably well in the second quarter of 2026 despite geopolitical uncertainties.

Mfg PMI eases to 54.2 as new biz orders slow

New Delhi: India's manufacturing sector activity growth eased in June, as new business orders and international sales increased at softer rates, resulting in slower expansions in buying levels, employment and output, a monthly survey said on Wednesday. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index fell from 55 in May to 54.2 in June. AGENCIES

Debt's the way for Indian IT acquisition funding

Slower Organic Growth Is Forcing Tech Cos To Rethink Long-Held Financial Strategies

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Bengaluru: Persistent Systems' $1.5-billion bridge financing from Barclays for its proposed acquisition of German IT firm Nagarro is the latest sign that Indian IT companies are increasingly comfortable using debt to fund transformative acquisitions. This marks a departure from the industry's long-standing preference for cash-rich, debt-free balance sheets.

The financing, backed by a corporate guarantee of up to $1.7 billion from Persistent, reflects a broader shift in capital allocation as IT firms race to build AI capabilities, expand geographically and acquire specialised talent at a time when organic growth is slowing. The trend has been gathering pace. Earlier this year, Coforge secured a $550-million, three-year term loan from JPMorgan, Bank of America and HSBC to finance its $2.3-billion acquisition of Encora. Last year, Cognizant funded part of its $1.3-billion acquisition of Belcan through a mix of cash and debt and also borrowed to finance a $1-billion share buyback—an unusual move in an industry that has traditionally relied on internal cash generation.

Persistent said debt was the most efficient financing route. "Before this acquisition, we had roughly $300 million in cash and zero debt," Persistent CEO Sandeep Kalra said. "We also received significant inbound interest from private equity firms interested in partnering with us on the asset side without requiring equity dilution. We had multiple financing options, including raising equity through a QIP, but we believe our equity is valuable and did not want to dilute shareholders."

Kalra said the acquisition is expected to be 5%-6% earnings per share (EPS) accretive in the first year, excluding one-time costs, even after factoring in the cost of debt. Industry experts, however, say the financing reflects a deeper structural shift underway in global IT services.

"The sheer velocity of technological change, combined with consecutive years of tepid organic revenue growth, is forcing IT services companies to aggressively acquire new capabilities or risk drifting into irrelevance," said Ramkumar Ramamoorthy, partner at Catalincs. "Companies that were once reluctant to draw down their cash reserves are now willing to raise debt because they believe acquisitions will deliver greater relevance and sustainable long-term growth."

Former Infosys CFO Mohandas Pai said acquisitions are increasingly becoming a strategic necessity as AI reshapes the technology services landscape. "Many smaller IT companies are attempting large acquisitions, sometimes beyond what their balance sheets would ordinarily support, in the hope of accelerating growth, expanding revenues and gaining scale," Pai said. "The risk is that if the acquired company itself is significantly disrupted by AI and its revenues decline, the acquirer could face serious financial challenges."

Pai cautioned that taking on substantial debt simply to boost revenues by 40%-50% over a short period carries considerable risk. Some companies, he said, appear to believe their valuation multiples can be sustained by becoming larger through acquisitions. However, higher leverage could eventually weigh on valuations if the expected growth fails to materialise.

Phil Fersht, CEO of US IT advisory firm HFS Research, said investors should focus less on the debt itself and more on what the capital is buying. "If debt is used to acquire scarce AI capabilities, engineering talent, industry IP or platform assets that accelerate future growth, it can be a very sensible use of capital," he said. "The services firms that succeed will be the ones that use their balance sheets to buy relevance, not just revenue."

WHY DEBT IS NO LONGER A DIRTY WORD

- **AI race needs speed:** Acquisitions help companies build AI capabilities much faster than developing them internally
- **Debt avoids dilution:** Borrowing funds deals without issuing new shares or reducing shareholder ownership
- **Cash remains intact:** Companies preserve cash reserves for future investments and business needs
- **Growth needs a boost:** Slower organic growth is pushing firms to pursue acquisition-led expansion
- **Buy capabilities instantly:** M&A delivers AI talent, technology, IP and new client relationships in one transaction
- **Strong balance sheets matter:** Cash-rich IT firms can comfortably raise debt to finance strategic acquisitions
- **Buying relevance:** Companies are using their balance sheets to stay competitive in an AI-driven technology landscape

Brands get quick-comm boost in summer sales

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New Delhi: Peak temperatures and the sweltering heat this year have delivered a windfall for consumer brands, with quick-commerce platforms driving robust growth in heat-linked categories.

As temperatures climbed across the country, demand for products ranging from ice creams and beverages to sunscreens more than doubled year-on-year in May as consumers sought relief from the relentless heat, data culled by **TOI** from 1Digital-Stack, a market intelligence platform, showed.

Ice cream emerged as the standout performer this summer, with gross merchandise value (GMV) on quick-commerce platforms touching nearly Rs 560 crore in May, up 18% from April and 140% from a year earlier. The scorching summer fuelled demand across the country, with premium tubs and impulse cones driving much of the growth as consumers traded up on seasonal treats, the analysis said. Beverages followed closely with a GMV of Rs 460 crore in May, a jump of 114% year-on-year, driven by the summer heat, premiumisation and a wider assortment on quick-commerce platforms.

"We are seeing strong summer-led demand across immediate consumption and on-the-go occasions," said Nitin Bhandari, VP & GM, beverages, PepsiCo India and South Asia. "Our portfolio spans multiple price points, with a clear focus on making refreshment more accessible. At the same time, value and affordability continue to drive on-the-go, out-of home hydration choices."

Further, face-care products, including sunscreens and face washes, also saw robust momentum, with sales climbing 96% to Rs 380 crore from a year earlier, fuelled by an aggressive push by direct-to-consumer beauty brands and influencer-led content on skincare routines, the data revealed. Industry executives attributed the sharp uptick to the rapid expansion by Blinkit, Zepto and Swiggy Instamart into Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, where consumers are increasingly shifting routine purchases from neighbourhood kirana stores to instant-delivery platforms. The multi-city rollout of services, such as Amazon Now and Flipkart Minutes, has further intensified competition beyond the metros.

"Seasonal categories such as ice creams, cold beverages, fresh fruits and everyday essentials are witnessing a clear surge in demand," an Amazon India spokesperson said. "The strong customer response reinforces our focus on combining wide selection with great value and ultra-fast delivery. In response, we've significantly expanded our selection, introducing a wider range of ice creams, early-season mango varieties as well as summer essentials, including swimming gear, ceiling & smart fans and smoothie blenders," the spokesperson added.

HEATWAVE TRIGGERS SALES WAVE

Gross merchandise value (GMV) of **ice cream** touched nearly ₹560 crore in May, up 18% from April and 140% from a year earlier

Beverages followed with GMV of ₹460 crore in May, a rise of 114% y-o-y

Face-care products, including sunscreens and face washes, witnessed 96% increase in sales to ₹380 crore from a year earlier

Recruiters deploy AI to catch ghost coders

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Bengaluru: The rise of GenAI is exposing new vulnerabilities in campus hiring, as recruiters confront increasingly sophisticated cheating techniques—from hidden wearable devices and AI-assisted tools to proxy candidates and ghost coders taking control of assessments through remote desktop software.

Recruiters say organised "interview-as-a-service" networks are making hiring fraud more sophisticated, prompting companies to deploy AI-powered proctoring as a key line of defence. Many Indian tech firms use AI-powered proctoring platforms like Talview and Mercer Mettl and assessment platforms like Hackerearth and Hackerrank to safeguard the integrity of hiring assessments.

According to Vivek Ravisankar, co-founder and CEO of tech hiring platform HackerRank, hiring integrity is being undermined on three fronts: leaked assessment questions, candidates using AI-assisted tools such as Cluely, Interviewman and remote-desktop applications during tests, and outright impersonation, where another individual takes an assessment or interview on behalf of the candidate.

"The issue is quite widespread, especially in university recruiting in India. We flag about 30%-35% of sessions with at least one suspicious behaviour. The biggest issue is the use of AI-powered cheating apps," Ravisankar told **TOI**.

To combat this, companies are moving away from browser-based assessments. AI-powered proctoring analyses webcam feeds, audio and screen activity to detect suspicious behaviour and safeguard the integrity of large-scale assessments.

More than half of HackerRank's university hiring assessments now run on a secure desktop application with candidates' cameras switched on. The platform automatically blocks known cheating applications, disables unauthorised software and creates a controlled testing environment.

CAMPUS HIRING: Proctoring tools evolve rapidly as recruiters tackle sophisticated AI-assisted assessment fraud across universities

HackerEarth says cheating methods have evolved just as rapidly. According to its CEO, Vikas Aditya, the four most common forms of malpractice today are AI-generated code submissions, proxy candidates hired through Discord or Telegram groups, off-camera assistance through secondary devices or another individual feeding answers, and virtual machines or remote-desktop software that conceal a second AI session from proctoring systems. "The common thread is that nearly all of these exploit the same weakness—a static assessment that scores only the final answer without observing how it was produced," Aditya said. "Our most effective defence is a short live follow-up interview where candidates explain their solution. Most candidates who relied on AI fail within two questions."

The shift is already visible in employer behaviour. HackerEarth's 2025 Technical Hiring Landscape Report shows the share of companies using proctored technical assessments rose from 64% at the beginning of 2025 to a peak of 77% by July. Across the year, nearly two-thirds of all technical assessments were proctored, reflecting growing concern over AI-enabled cheating. The industry believes many companies still underestimate the scale of the problem because conventional coding tests reveal only the final score—not how it was achieved.

"It helps to separate assistance from impersonation," Aditya said. "One is a genuine candidate using AI. The other is somebody else taking the assessment through proxy interviewers, deepfakes or remote-desktop 'ghost coders'. These require very different countermeasures."

Companies are therefore adopting layered defences. Secure browsers block copy-paste, multiple tabs and external applications, while identity verification combines government ID checks, facial matching and liveness detection to prevent proxy candidates. AI-based plagiarism detection and webcam monitoring help identify AI-generated responses, hidden devices and the presence of another person.

Hero Moto plans to invest ₹3,200cr

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New Delhi: Hero MotoCorp is set to invest Rs 3,200 crore in Andhra Pradesh over the next three to five years as India's largest two-wheeler maker ramps up manufacturing, strengthens its global supply chain and expands beyond vehicle production into higher-margin businesses such as accessories and merchandising.

The investment includes Rs 750 crore for the company's second Global Parts Centre (GPC 2.0) at its Tirupati facility, which will support domestic operations while supplying spare parts and completely knocked down (CKD) kits to overseas markets. The company expects the new facility to be operational within two years.

Hero also plans to significantly expand production capacity at its Tirupati plant, increasing annual output from about six lakh units to between 12 lakh and 15 lakh units. The expansion is expected to create around 4,000 jobs. The facility currently manufactures both internal combustion engine motorcycles and scooters as well as the company's electric vehicles.

Pawan Munjal, executive chairman, Hero MotoCorp said the expansion reflects the company's long-term confidence in Andhra Pradesh, citing the state's industry-friendly policies. The company has already invested around Rs 1,600 crore in the state.

A thought for today

Civilisation is progress towards a society of privacy. The savage's whole existence is public, ruled by laws of his tribe

AYN RAND

The 10-Digit Problem

Our phone numbers have become our identifiers online. That's dangerous. But what can we do about it?

In 2010, Dutch developers built a website called 'PleaseRobMe.com'. The idea was so simple, they had it up and running in four hours. It was also sensational, because by tapping residents' location data from Twitter – now X – and Foursquare, Please Rob Me could point out houses that were ripe for burgling. Of course, its aim was not to assist burglars but to demonstrate the dangers of oversharing online. It came months after then Mashable CEO Pete Cashmore famously declared: "Privacy is Dead". But privacy had been dying a long time already. In 1999, Sun Microsystems CEO Scott McNealy had described it as a "red herring".

If the internet, and our phones and apps, have left us with no place to hide, why do we still care about privacy? Why does insurance regulator Irdai flag dark patterns in insurance sales, and where's the need for WhatsApp to introduce usernames, to mask our phone numbers, although that move's under govt review now? There are good reasons. One, privacy is a fundamental need, which is why it's recognised as a fundamental right. Two, just because our privacy has been compromised so far, doesn't mean we shouldn't defend it anymore. Yes, in a world full of cameras and online surveillance, it's hard to be invisible, but good online hygiene can at least shield us from bad actors.

Even if you don't care about your photos and videos circulating among strangers, there's one aspect of your identity that you need to lock down. It's your phone number. It was never intended to be your identifier, but the world over, phone numbers got seeded into bank records, tax records, and then every subscription. Changing phone numbers became too cumbersome, so people got locked into them. And now, you are your number. But the problem is, your phone number is not only your identifier but also your authenticator, thanks to those OTPs. It's like having the same username and password.

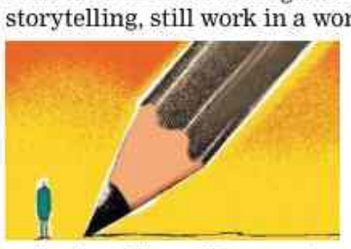
If you lose control of your phone, whether physically, or via SIM fraud, your life can turn upside down. And SIM fraud happens. Your number is part of so many databases – from shops to OTT platforms – that it has certainly been leaked many times. So, being careful with the information you share, especially phone numbers, is crucial. But strict data protection rules for intermediaries are equally important. Govt might eventually not allow WhatsApp usernames, but it has to find ways to deal with the problem of dark patterns.

Author, Not BOThor

A writer trolled online for alleged AI-aided storytelling, has been cleared. There's a big lesson here for many

A winner of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize, Trinidadian Jamir Nazir, is not a BOThor (bot+author), organisers of the prize confirmed, after their own weeks-long investigation. The absolute storm over online allegations – that so-called 'AI detectors' had found Nazir allegedly used AI to author his story – ended flat. Alas, not before accusations went global. Literary magazine *Granta* refused to publish the winning entries on its website, exiting its partnership with Commonwealth Foundation. That helps no one.

That Nazir's is an authentic voice, is vindication, and a relief. It reassures us of two things. One, the metrics of judging authentic storytelling, still work in a world 1) seemingly ambushed by AI, 2) despite malicious social media and 3) despite the prevailing language of round-the-clock crisis. Two, there are plenty of authors, aspiring writers, and other creative sorts who refuse to cheat themselves. Authenticity is a deeply cherished value for most in both creative and scientific worlds, so using AI to write stories, or publish fake papers, may hold little to no appeal. Credit to the organisers and jury for not being reactionary to the online slamming, and instead, seeking to understand each of the candidates' writing process, whereby Nazir's name was cleared. But, *Granta*'s short fuse is a short story – of an AI-fuelled sense of catastrophe. Which is, what can be worse than AI gutting the soul of storytelling – the human connection? It is this very (false) belief – the machine is more creative and powerful than the human mind and imagination – that undermines human ability and capacity.



In this case, a writer's integrity was on trial. Tomorrow, it could be any act of human ingenuity. Are we to be guilty until proven innocent in the court of viral doubt? Institutions have to out-think viral mobs, not cave in under social media trials, or punish authenticity. Adapt. As for an apology to Nazir…does the internet care?

Colonial cancers

Why only Kohinoor, take our heatwave too

Bachi Karkaria

Colonial hangover or plain bloody-mindedness. Britain's heatwave is a global obsession, but no May Day distress call over our mercury *normally* rising over 40 degrees in the shade (that's if you can find it). Perversely, I landed in London's oven just as Mumbai finally felt like the fridge. But there's a welcome dark cloud in the blazing blue: years of making do have prepared us for all that Britain's making such a to-do about. 'Sweet are the uses of adversity,' as Shakespeare said long before Reduce, Recycle, Re-use. We've already been there, done that, bought the sun hat – or didn't need to.

Delhi's ₹3,000 desert coolers took care of what today needs Sir Sadiq Khan's £1.5bn Heat-Ready plan. Our delivery boys deliver in temperatures which would shut down London Transport. Try riding a sealed-window bus here; give me the gusts of pollution breezing through BEST's open ones any day. We travelled for an hour on the non-'climate-controlled' Tube to a museum only to be told – very politely, very apologetically – that it was 'shutting down in 30 minutes (at 1pm) on account of the heat – in consideration of the staff'.

erratica

Get some perspective, *yaar*! A heatwave is declared when London records 28+ degrees for three consecutive days; at that level Bombabes press the AC's *down* button. Nagpur routinely crosses 45°C; here 38°C presses the Red Alert button.

We just jump in to cool down. No need for the Met Office beach app with wave heights and sea-surface temperatures.

Most of our kids have only the street. No need for the parental warning to check playground equipment as 'metal slides can get really hot'.

So many Indians wear the bare minimum. No need for a heatwave to do so.

We've survived sans taps. No need for a City Hall supplementary budget for thousands of water fountains.

Britain is now forced to live like its ex-colonies. Here's a Buddhist mantra: '*Dukkha* is inevitable; suffering is optional.' Or the more localised, 'Keep Calm and Karma on.'

***

Alec Smart said: "God help those who help themselves to His funds."

Artificial Selection, AI Edition

Unlike the dotcom peak, when tech-fuelled returns were spilling across industries and markets, today investors are sucking money away from non-AI industries, and from nations peripheral to the AI boom

Ruchir Sharma

Columnist based in New York

It's hard to recall a time when global markets were so obsessed with a single storyline. AI boom is now so powerful and widespread in nature that it is overwhelming all other drivers of returns, and shaping a new AI-based world order.

Relative performance of the world's major stock markets over the past year can be explained by how much exposure they have to AI. Nations with a large foothold in the "stack" of industries developing AI infra and services are massively outperforming, while those without are lagging by record margins. Winners include US and China, thanks above all to their foundational AI models; Taiwan and South Korea on the strength of chip manufacturers; Japan and Israel on a broad array of AI skills.

The partial winners are secondary suppliers. They include nations that are exporters of circuits, servers and other AI-related electronic hardware – such as Mexico, Thailand, Vietnam. Or that play a role in the AI stack as both exporters and sizeable bases for data centres, such as Malaysia and Singapore.

The losers include much of Europe, with the odd exception (Netherlands is a major supplier of advanced chip-making machines). Worst off are those countries that lack "AI plays" and rely heavily on the industries most exposed to disruption, including IT services.

In US, AI plays constitute more than 40% of the market cap and have accounted for more than 80% of the returns this year. The return and concentration profile is similar in Japan and even more extreme in South Korea and Taiwan. In China, all the action is taking place in newer growth-oriented segments of the market, while the old-economy sectors struggle. Meanwhile, the likes of India and Philippines, which are perceived to be at the wrong end of the AI-wrecking ball, are well in the red this year.

Image: AI

While the internet frenzy of the late 1990s was also an overpowering global phenomenon, it was not so narrowly focused. The leading tech subsectors back then were communications equipment, semiconductors and wireless telecom services, which accounted for 60% of global market gains at the dotcom peak in early 2000. So far this year, the three leading tech subsectors (semiconductors, hardware and electronic equipment) have contributed a significantly larger share of global market gains, over 70%.

Also, unlike the dotcom peak, when tech-fuelled returns were spilling across industries and markets, today they are sucking money away from non-AI industries and nations. Even in US, investment outside of the tech sector is declining in real terms. Meanwhile, foreigners keep pulling money out of countries seen as peripheral to the AI boom, from UK to Indonesia.

Global investors may be focused almost exclusively on AI, but they are not choosing winners at random. Leading AI nations are long-established tech powers with a deep commitment to R&D, spending more than 3% of GDP on average – over three times the level of lagging countries. They also invest heavily in tech, with tech spending averaging 3.7% of GDP among AI winners, compared with 2.7% for partial winners and 1.6% for losers.

To be sure, no leader's position is secure. In US, the performance of the dominant Mag 7 tech stocks is increasingly diverging, with three up, three down and one flat for the year, while all face some form of foreign competition, often from China.

In China, giants such as Alibaba and Tencent are still trying to determine how to profit from AI and are down around 30% this year. The real AI momentum in China is with newer tech firms, often listed on secondary boards that are much better known to local than to foreign investors, such as ChiNext; it is up 35% for the year.

In Japan, market leadership has shifted sharply towards tech over the past year, with semiconductors up 200% and computer memory pioneer Kioxia rising by 3,500%, to become the nation's single largest stock.

The AI booster effect continues to help power many economies through one crisis after another, from the tariff war to the Iran oil shock. Expectations for GDP growth have risen by nearly a full percentage point for the AI winners since the start of the year, while falling significantly for the losers. In countries like US, Taiwan and Korea, the large gains in advanced manufacturing, the associated surge in profits and the wealth effect from the AI-led stock market gains keep lifting economic growth. In countries like China, Thailand and Mexico, tech exports are rising rapidly enough to offset weakness in other parts of their economies, including domestic demand.

In short, it's an AI-driven world. Of course, this monomania will not last forever. The speculative enthusiasm will fade even as the technological revolution endures and expands in scope. As was the case following the railroad boom of the 19th century and the internet craze at the turn of this century, a more balanced global market will eventually re-emerge. But so long as investors continue to see AI as the sole foundation of the next world order, they will keep ranking nations based on their tech prowess.

What A Narrow Escape For American Citizenship

The country came within a single Supreme Court vote of overturning more than a century of settled birthright law. That's how fragile even its oldest constitutional guarantees have become under Trump

Dan Cassino

Professor of Govt & Politics

On Tuesday, US's Supreme Court narrowly upheld the long-standing US practice of awarding citizenship to all children born in the country, regardless of who their parents are. The case, *Trump vs Barbara*, arose from an executive order Trump 2.0 issued on his first day in office, directing local govts to deny citizenship to any children born of mothers who were not citizens, not married to citizens, or were in US on non-resident visas.

The court outcome wasn't a surprise, but few expected the decision to be as close as it was. This reinforces the perception of the Court as being political, rather than impartial. And even if the timing of the decision was a ploy to quiet calls for Court reform, it's unlikely to work.

To recap, while most scholars and politicians had regarded the issue as long-settled, Trump and some anti-immigration activists became focused on the status of the children of undocumented immigrants, and people giving birth in US while on tourist visas.

Children born in US are citizens at birth, even if their parents came to US illegally, a fact that has complicated Trump's mass deportation efforts. There has also been concern over birth tourism, a practice in which wealthy foreigners, many from China or India, pay US hospitals tens of thousands of dollars to come to US to give birth, hoping that US citizenship will give their child an advantage as an adult.

Now turning to the surprising closeness of the decision, Chief Justice Roberts, in particular, has railed against the idea that the Court is political. And indeed, US judges are generally like referees overseeing a sporting match – interpreting and applying the law, not creating it. But while that describes most judges, at most levels of govt, it falls apart at the Supreme Court.

Since the 1920s, the Court has had a discretionary docket, meaning that it only hears the cases that it wants to decide on, rather than all the cases that are appealed to it. Because it only hears the very small number of cases where there's a real question about what the law means, this opens the way for justices to bring their own political views to bear, since there isn't a clear meaning to draw from.

The birthright citizenship case is a kind of exception. The 14th Amendment – passed after the US Civil War to ensure full citizenship to freed slaves – has long been interpreted to guarantee US citizenship to everyone born here, with limited exceptions, like the children of diplomats. Despite recent efforts on the part of some right-wing legal scholars to manufacture controversy over what the Amendment's writers might have meant, there has never really been disagreement about birthright citizenship. So, it was a surprise that the Court even took the case.

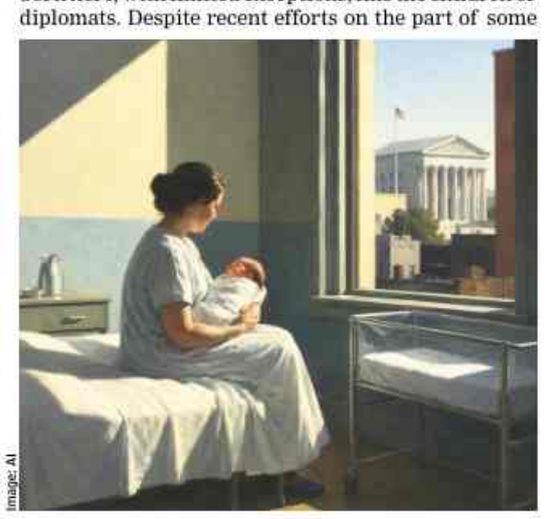


Image: AI

The fact that it was so close – part of the questions decided by a one-vote margin – came as a shock to many observers, with four justices apparently willing to go along with the Trump administration in throwing out more than a century of practice.

Decisions like this have meant that as much as Supreme Court justices fight to be seen as referees, the public increasingly sees them as partisan. Bolstered by decisions like the one that awarded the US presidential election to George W Bush, or the more recent decision that ended federal protections for women's right to have an abortion, the push for Court reform has gained momentum. The exact form of that reform will be a major issue in the fight for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2028.

To some extent, the Court upholding birthright citizenship saved the Trump administration from its own mess, as repeal would have been a logistical nightmare. Birth certificates and reporting are radically decentralised across towns and counties, with no way of checking on the immigration status of parents.

The whole point of overruling birthright citizenship was to strip citizenship from immigrants' children, so that they could be deported. But would adults, having been citizens their whole lives, suddenly be stateless? Taken to its logical conclusion, this rule would threaten the citizenship of almost anyone whose family arrived after the 1700s.

I'm a citizen, in part, because my great-grandfather was born in US to immigrant parents. If we're retroactively stripping him of citizenship, does that take away the citizenship of my grandparents? My parents? Me? The Trump administration doesn't seem to have prepared for such questions, and we're lucky that they won't need to be addressed.

The decision also has to be understood in the context of the Court's other major decisions in recent days – like granting Trump the right to fire independent agencies' heads. The birthright citizenship decision on the very last day of the session, seems like an attempt by Roberts to argue that the Court can be trusted, in advance of the upcoming midterm elections. But the fact that US was one vote away from upending more than a century of precedent and stripping millions of their citizenship will make the case for Court reform more, not less urgent.

The writer teaches at Fairleigh Dickinson University, US

Calvin & Hobbes

Sacred*space*

Don't be satisfied with stories, how things have gone with others. Unfold your own myth.

Jalaluddin Rumi, The Essential Rumi

The Viking & The Yogi: What Matters Is Your Goal

THE SPEAKING TREE

Footballers' celebrations are a story by themselves. After a goal by Erling Haaland – who else – took Norway to World Cup prequarterfinals, he struck a post-match pose, wearing the horned Viking helmet. Contrast that with his signature post-goal yoga pose: eyes closed, fingers in Gyan Mudra, as he did after his goal against Iraq. When he dons the helmet, he's the victor, leaning into primal Nordic myth, projecting dominance. But in his yoga pose, he's sublimating that victory, he's internalising the moment. You can celebrate by posing as a conqueror of the world. More interestingly, and profoundly, you can mark your moment of triumph by mastering the world within.

Why Manika's crying foul over Asiad snub

The star paddler has complained about selection criteria and lack of support from the TT federation as her exclusion from the national squad ignites a debate that pits rules against record

Anil.Dias@timesofindia.com

When an Asian and Commonwealth Games medallist, three-time Olympian and the poster girl, inarguably, of Indian table tennis is left out of the squad for a major international event, questions are bound to be asked. And even though Manika Batra has herself declared that she's giving up the search for answers, her exclusion has opened a debate about the future direction of Indian table tennis itself.

The women's squad for the Sept 19-Oct 4 Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games is to be led by Sreeja Akula. It has Yashaswini Ghorpade, Diya Chitale, Sutirtha Mukherjee and 17-year-old Syndrela Das as its other members. Table Tennis Federation of India's (TTFI) decision to name Manika and Swastika Ghosh as reserves has cast the spotlight on its selection criteria, leading to talk about whether Indian TT is entering a phase where potential is being prioritised over experience.

ONLY INDIAN WOMAN WITH TT SINGLES GOLD AT CWG

Age | **31**

HIGHEST INT'L RANKING	CURRENT INT'L RANKING
24 (May 2024)	**51** (June 2027)

Major Medals

Commonwealth Games: GOLD 2 | SILVER 1 | BRONZE 1

Asian Games: BRONZE 1

Letter Vs Spirit

TTFI has maintained the selection process strictly followed its published policy, which assigns 40% weight to international rankings, 50% to domestic performances, and 10% to the discretion of the selection committee with players ranked inside the WTT top-50 qualifying automatically. At the June 2 rankings cut-off, Manika was world No. 51 and just three WTT points short of making the top-50. While participation in just a single WTT Star Contender event would have earned her five points, not appearing in any tournaments on the domestic circuit is also seen as having hit her chances.

In a strongly worded statement, Manika questioned both the process and TTFI's interpretation of its own rules. "If I do not receive satisfactory answers regarding the basis of this decision, I will be left with no option but to explore all remedies available to me, including legal recourse," she had said. When TTFI responded, insisting that the team had been picked according to the set criteria, Manika backed away from pursuing the matter legally even as she raised fresh questions over the validity of the selection committee itself. However, she finally signalled the end of her fight on social media, saying, "I have put down my sword. I am mentally exhausted from this fight."

While TTFI said it has strictly gone with its official policy to select the Asiad squad, some have wondered why it didn't make an exception for Manika, given that there is room for officials to exercise discretion in finalising names

A former India player believes the current policy requires improvement, particularly the importance attached to domestic performances. "International ranking points should carry more weight because they reflect performances against stronger opposition," the former international told **TOI**.

However, the player was equally clear that athletes cannot expect exemptions from laid-down rules. "As athletes, you are not above the rules. You have to safeguard your place in the team. You can't take selection for granted."

Syndrela's inclusion is viewed as noteworthy as it wasn't through discretion but on the basis of merit under the published policy. Her rise reflects the growing depth in Indian women's TT and the emergence of a younger generation. Whether the selectors also viewed this Asiad cycle as an opportunity to invest in that next generation is a question only the selection committee can answer.

Few dispute Manika's credentials. She remains the only Indian woman to win a Commonwealth Games (CWG) singles gold and has defeated top Chinese players at the biggest meets. But winning a medal at the Asian Games is a big ask. India has never won a singles medal at the continental games, a reminder of the extraordinary standards in Asia, where China, Japan, South Korea and Chinese Taipei dominate.

Discretion Or Not

The biggest question surrounding the controversy is over the discretionary clause, which allows room for taking into account exceptional circumstances. Ahead of the 2023 Asian Games, veteran Sharath Kamal was granted a discretionary entry after injury affected his ranking. One can argue that Manika, too, could have been extended such consideration. Her recent journey has been far from smooth. Following the death of her father last year, she took nearly two months away from competition while also managing a recurring back injury. The break affected her world ranking, forcing her to chase points on the demanding WTT circuit.

According to sources familiar with the selection committee's deliberations, the history of legal battles shaped the thinking this time. The selectors believed that overlooking a player who had met the criteria in favour of Manika could open the door to legal challenges from those left out. After all, Diya Chitale had famously moved Delhi High Court in June 2022 to challenge her exclusion from the CWG squad. Chitale was included in the squad following her writ petition, with the selectors dropping Archana Kamath. But Kamath then moved Karnataka HC. The court dismissed her petition, stating that selection criteria fell within the domain of expert committees and that the existing criteria were valid. Similar petitions by Manush Shah and Swastika Ghosh were dismissed by Delhi HC.

Unanswered Questions

From the selectors' perspective, then, the safest course was to apply the policy uniformly, irrespective of stature or past achievements. But if the discretionary provision exists precisely to deal with exceptional circumstances, then when should it be exercised? That's one of the questions Manika's exclusion has raised.

"I don't know why the committee didn't make an exception," the former India player said. "The team would definitely benefit from having Manika because of her experience."

TTFI can legitimately argue that it followed policy. Equally, critics can question whether a policy designed to eliminate subjectivity has become so rigid that it leaves little room for common sense. The federation has also not publicly explained whether long-term planning determined its thinking.

Members of TTFI who were asked for comment said that the official statement from the federation was satisfactory. But Manika's omission has forced Indian TT to confront some uncomfortable questions. Did the selection policy identify India's strongest possible team? Was the discretionary provision applied consistently? And, as one generation of stars begins to make way for the next, what should selectors value more: proven pedigree or future potential?

As 'docfluencers' sell brands, ethics rules struggle to keep up

Rema.Nagarajan@timesofindia.com

A dermatologist plugging a skin-cleanser brand. A trainee gastroenterologist making a reel to promote a sunscreen brand. An MBBS doctor who doubles as a life coach and promotes facials by a service aggregator. A medical student who is promoting hair fixers, face wash and serums by brand name. A family medicine specialist who claims to be a sexologist selling many brands of penile size-enhancing gels and oils. Social media platforms are crowded with medicos running their own YouTube channels or posting reels on Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Telegram and Facebook plugging products.

Even as AIIMS, Delhi issued comprehensive social media guidelines, to protect its brand and ensure responsible use of social media, budding doctors and trainee specialists across India who have become social media influencers with millions of followers are merrily promoting everything from hair serums, skin care products and salon service platforms to ayurvedic sexual performance enhancers. Many are raking in several lakhs a month from these promotional videos and posts.

AI image

There is no specific regulation on social media use by medical students and doctors. However, IMC regulations prohibit doctors from providing brand endorsements. These regulations are for doctors; there seem to be none for medical students

There is no specific regulation on social media use by medical students and doctors. The National Medical Commission Registered Medical Practitioner (Professional Conduct) Regulations, 2023, which were notified in Aug 2023 and later held in abeyance, had a specific section on "conduct of RMPs (registered medical practitioners) on social media". However, even without the social media guidelines, the Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations, 2002, which are in force, clearly prohibit doctors from giving "to any person, whether for compensation or otherwise, any approval, recommendation, endorsement, certificate, report or statement with respect to any drug, medicine, nostrum remedy, surgical, or therapeutic article, apparatus or appliance or any commercial product or article with respect of any property, quality or use thereof…".

While these regulations might be applicable to doctors, there seem to be none for medical students. Hence, many medical students shoot reels inside hospitals, show patients' faces claiming to have taken consent, show themselves holding newborns after assisting a delivery, or even talk about cutting up cadavers, all to attract more followers. Once they garner a few lakh followers, or a few million, they cash in by promoting products and brands for a fee.

"Many of these doctors are making more money by doing this than what they could earn practising medicine. This has also led to some who completed MBBS dropping the idea of postgraduation and instead becoming full-time content creators," said a young doctor, adding that they undermined the dignity of the profession and brought disrepute to doctors.

Hawking rags-to-riches stories, dating tips, advice on love, sex and dhoka, narratives of surviving conservative families, heartbreak survival formulae, parental and societal pressure to get married — it is all grist for the mill. These are interspersed with lectures on how to crack NEET, on life in coaching hubs like Kota, life-coach-type lectures on handling the pressures of studies, poor marks, or long duty hours, on what the life of a doctor is like, discussions on doctors' salaries, and so on. Whatever helps increase the number of followers — and then videos promoting various products are also inserted.

When **TOI** reached out to NMC chairperson Dr Abhijat Sheth on the lack of regulation, he said ethical obligations of RMPs extended to all modes of professional communication, including digital and social media. "Promotional activities that are misleading, unscientific or amount to endorsement of products in a manner inconsistent with professional ethics are not acceptable," said Dr Sheth. He added that the NMC recognised that the rapid growth of social media created new ethical challenges, and that it would look into the need for further guidance in this area as part of the ongoing review of the professional conduct framework.

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

(Regd. Office : PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001)
Corporate identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in (Mobile No. 96461-10914)

E-Tender Enq. No. 741/P-1/EMPW-13355 dtd. 19.06.2026

Dy.Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Procurement Cell-1) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2026_POWER_170632_1for Routine Mtc. of Ash Dykes and Micro hydel channel and Power House along with Routine cleaning of trash rack intake structure, forebay etc.at GGSSTP, Roopnagar. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in** from 22.06.2026 from 05.00 PM onwards.

Note : Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in**

RTP-60/26, DPR/Pb.:1079/12/2026-27/12863

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

(Regd. Office : PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001)
Corporate identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in (Phone No.- 96461-18774)
Email id: semeteringpatiala@gmail.com

Tender Enquiry No. MQP-265/2026-27/PR Dated: 30.06.2026

Chief Engineer/Metering, C-3, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala invites e-tender for **1-in-1 Polycarbonate Meter Boxes (Cabinets) for housing Single Phase Meters for FY 2026-27.**

For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in** from **01.07.2026, 03.00 PM onwards.**

Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in.**

C692/26, DPR/Pb.:1079/12/2026-27/12869

U.P. State Industrial Development Authority

UPSIDA Complex: A-1/4, Lakhanpur, Kanpur- 208024

Request for EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EoI)

Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) invites Expression of Interest (EoI) from eligible and experienced environmental consultancy firms for appointment of consultants for carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Studies, preparation of Environmental Management Plan (EMP), and obtaining Environmental Clearance (EC) for industrial development projects.

The proposed assignment pertains to major integrated industrial township projects including:

- **TRANS GANGA CITY, DISTRICT UNNAO.**
- **SARASWATI HI-TECH CITY, DISTRICT PRAYAGRAJ.**

The consultancy services shall be carried out in accordance with applicable environmental laws and regulations.

The detailed EoI / RFP document will be available on the official website: https://etender.up.nic.in

Interested agencies are requested to submit their Expression of Interest within the prescribed date and time as mentioned in the detailed document. For any other information please contact Mr. P. Salonia, Sr. Manager (Engg.), Mobile Number - 9871090103, email ID: eehqupsida@gmail.com

The last date to submit the EOI is **24 July 2026 till 1700 hrs.**

Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

(Regd. Office : PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001)
Corporate identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in (Mobile No. 96461-10914)

E-Tender Enq. No. 746/P-1/EMP-13360 dated 24-06-2026

Dy.Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Procurement Cell-1) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2026_POWER_170860_1 for Requirement of Various works like routine cleaning & upkeep of Shivalik Field Hostel, Subordinate Rest House, Extension field hostel and officer club at Nuhon Colony, GGSSTP, Rupnagar as per scope of work (PART-I). For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in** from 25-6-26 from 05.00 PM onwards.

Note: Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in**

RTP-63/26, DPR/Pb.:1079/12/2026-27/12866

महाराष्ट्र शासन अंगिकृत

पुणे गृहनिर्माण व क्षेत्रविकास मंडळ, पुणे

(म्हाडाचा विभागीय घटक)

गृहनिर्माण भवन, (अलंकार थिएटरच्या मागे) आगरकर नगर, पुणे ४११००१. फोन : ०२०-२६१२१८३०

ई-निविदा/का.अ.१/पुणे/२८/२०२५-२६.
(द्वितीय बोली)

Main Portal :- http://mahatenders.gov.in

उपमुख्य अभियंता/पुणे मंडळ यांच्या वतीने कार्यकारी अभियंता-१/पुणे मंडळ यांचे मार्फत ई-निविदा प्रक्रियेच्या माध्यमातुन डीजिटल स्वाक्षरी असणारे विनाशर्त ऑनलाईन ई-निविदा खालील नमुद केलेल्या कामासाठी मागविण्यात येत आहेत. ई-निविदा तपशील व दस्तऐवज वर नमुद केलेल्या संकेतस्थळावर **दि. ०२/०७/२०२६** सकाळी ११.०० पासुन उपलब्ध असेल.

कामाचे नाव	ई-निविदा रक्कम	बयाणा रक्कम	ई-निविदा संचाची किंमत
पुणे गृहनिर्माण व क्षेत्रविकास मंडळ, पुणे यांचे अखत्यारितील गट नं. २९६, २९९, ३०४, ३०५, ३०६, ३०७, ३०८ + ३०९, ३४०, ३४८, ३४९ व ३५०, मौजे जांभुळ, ता. मावळ, जि. पुणे येथील मोकळ्या जमिनीसाठी इच्छुक निविदादारांकडून लिज पध्दतीवर जमीन वितरण करणेबाबत ई-निविदा मागविण्यात येत आहे.	रु. १,२०,४७,०८,८२३/- (जीएसटी वगळून)	रु. ३,००,०००/-	रु. ५,९००/- (जी.एस.टी.सह) विनापरतावा

निविदा स्विकृती अधिकाऱ्यांकडे निविदा स्विकारण्याचा अथवा आलेल्या सर्व ई-निविदा रद्द करण्याचा संपूर्ण अधिकार राहील.

स्वाक्षरीत/-
कार्यकारी अभियंता-१
पुणे गृहनिर्माण व क्षेत्रविकास मंडळ
पुणे-१

दि. ०२.०७.२०२६

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

(Regd. Office : PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001)
Corporate identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in (Mobile No. 96461-10914)

E-Tender Enq. No. 742/P-1/EMPW-13305 dtd. 19.06.2026

Dy. Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Procurement Cell-1) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2026_POWER_169109_1 for Lifting and transportation of spilled coal/reject stone from various locations in CHP area at GGSSTP, Roopnagar. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in** from 22.06.2026 from 05.00 PM onwards.

Note : Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in**

RTP-57/26, DPR/Pb.:1079/12/2026-27/12860

Government of Maharashtra
The World Bank Aided
Hon. Balasaheb Thackeray Agribusiness & Rural Transformation (SMART) Project
Project Implementation Unit- Agriculture

Request for Bids (RFB)

RFB Ref No: IN-PIU AGRI-521487-GO-RFB

Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of the Integrated Millet Processing & Value Addition Plant

The Project Implementation Unit - Agriculture of the SMART Project invites bids from the prospective bidders for the captioned subject. The RFB document will be available on the GoM E-Procurement Portal **https://mahatenders.gov.in** and the project website **www.smart-mh.org** from **02/07/2026.** The mode of bid submission is online only and interested bidders need to submit their "Bid" through **https://mahatenders.gov.in** latest by **03/08/2026 up to 2.00 PM.** If there is any change in the RFB document or any other scheduled date, it will be published only on the aforesaid website.

RFB Inviting Authority
Head, PIU - Agriculture,
Krushi Bhavan, 6th Floor, DTC Centre, Vakil Nagar,
Erandwane, Pune - 411004
Email: smart.piuagri@gmail.com

DGIPR/2026-2027/1417

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

KARNATAKA STATE MEDICAL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED

No.1, Dr. Siddaiah Puranik Road, KHB Colony, Magadi Road, Bengaluru-560079. Phone: +91-80-29619801, Email: md.ksmscl@gmail.com

No:KSMSCL/DRUGS/RETND/25-26 AI/ALBENDAZOLE TAB/11/2026-27 Dated:01.07.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Ref: 1. Tender Notification No:KSMSCL/DRUGS/RETND/25-26 AI/ALBENDAZOLE TAB/11/2026-27, Dt: 01.07.2026 (IND-0405).

Nationwide Tender is invited through **e-Tendering system** under KTPP Act 1999 and Rules 2000 for the following tender:

1. **Re-Tender for the supply of Albendazole Tablets 400mg for various Health Institutions across Karnataka under Annual Indent 2025-26 (IND-0405).**

Details regarding EMD, Terms and Conditions and other information are available in the Tender Document, which can be downloaded from the website:**https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** from **01.07.2026.** The eligible tenderers shall submit their e-tenders under e-procurement platform for above mentioned tenders. Further information if any may be obtained from this office.

Sd/-
Managing Director
KSMSCL, Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/1428/CCL/2026-27

BENGALURU CENTRAL CITY CORPORATION

Office of the Executive Engineer, Shivaji Nagar Division, Thimmaiah Road, Queens Road, Bangalore.

No: EE/SJN/TEND/18/2026-27 Date: 01.07.2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Two Cover System)

(Through GOK KPP Portal https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in only)

The Executive Engineer (Shivajinagar), BCCC invites tenders from eligible contractors registered in BBMP/ KPWD/ CPWD/ Railways/MES/ National Highway or any state Govt. Organization for the construction of works detailed in the Table below.

Tender Document KW4

Sl. No.	Name of the Work
1.	Reconstruction and Development of Russel Market in Shivaji Nagara in Bengaluru City. **Approx Value Of Work : Rs. 7,000.00 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 70,00,000.00**

Calendar of Events : (1) Tender Documents may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal of GOK from **15.07.2026 (2)** Pre bid meeting will be held on **22.07.2026 at 03.30 PM** in the Office of the Executive Engineer, Shivajinagar Division, Thimmaiah Road, Queens road, Bengaluru-560001 (3) Last Date for uploading the Filled Tender Document is **30.07.2026 upto 04.00 p.m. (4)** Date of Opening of the Technical Bid Tenders is on **31.07.2026 after 04.30 P.M.**

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Shivaji Nagar Division, BCCC

DIRECTORATE OF ELECTRONIC DELIVERY OF CITIZEN SERVICES (EDCS)

Suvarna Bhavan Building, 3rd Floor, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bengaluru - 560 055.
Ph: 080-22230281, Fax:080-22230282 email:dir-edcs@karnataka.gov.in

No: EDCS/14/ADM/2020-K1-EDCS (322126) **Date:**30.06.2026

TENDER INVITATION

Applications have been invited from eligible BIDDERS for the below mentioned tenders invited through eprocurement platform of government of Karnataka
Website: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in

1) Tender No - DPAREGOV/2025-26/SE0036/CALL-3 (Request for proposal (RFP) for selection of Banking partner for Bangalore one & Karnataka one Project of Directorate of Electronic Delivery of Citizen Services) Eligible bidders shall apply on or before 16.07.2026, 5:30 PM.

Sd/-
Director
Directorate of EDCS

DIPR/CP/1424/CCL/2026-27

Government of Karnataka
Office of the Executive Engineer, Minor Irrigation And Ground Water Development Division, Ballari

IFT No. EE/MI & GWDD/Bly/AE-1/2026-27/771
Date :24.06.2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION(KW-3)

On behalf of Hon'bleGovernor of Karnataka the Executive Engineer, Minor Irrigation and Ground Water Development Division Ballari invited the tender for the work of under **Head ofAccount 4702 Plan**in Vijayanagar Dist., Hadagali and H.B.Hallitaluk **03**Works in **TwoCover System Minimum Estimatedamount put to tender isRs.55.01lakhs, Maximum Estimated amount put to tender is Rs.60.56lakhs**the tenderers should download and submitt the tenders from**date : 24.06.2026 to 01.07.2026upto 17.30 hours. Date & Time of opening Technical Bidis on 03.07.2026at 11.00 hours. Opening of Financial Bidis on 06.07.2026 at 11.00 hours**.Anyother information shouldget by login the website **"KPPP"** websitehttp:// kppp.karnataka.gov.in

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
M.I. & G.W.D. Division, Ballari.

DIPR/Ballari/2026-27/KSMCA/RO No/291

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಲೋಕಸೇವಾ ಆಯೋಗ
ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಸೌಧ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು-560 001.

ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: **KPSCKA/ADMN/OUTS/11/2026-ADMN** ದಿನಾಂಕ: **01-07-2026.**

ಇ-ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆಯ ಸಂಕ್ಷಿಪ್ತ ಅಧಿಸೂಚನೆ

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಲೋಕಸೇವಾ ಆಯೋಗದ ಕಛೇರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮಂಜೂರಾಗಿ ಖಾಲಿಯಿರುವ ಹಿರಿಯ ಕಛೇರಿ ಪರಿಚಾರಕ ಮತ್ತು ಕಛೇರಿ ಪರಿಚಾರಕ ಹುದ್ದೆಗಳಿಗೆದುರಾಗಿ ಹೊರಗುತ್ತಿಗೆ ಆಧಾರದ ಮೇಲೆ ಗ್ರೂಪ್-ಡಿ/ಆಫೀಸ್ ಅಟೆಂಡೆಂಟ್ ಸಿಬ್ಬಂದಿಗಳ ಸೇವೆಯನ್ನು ಅರ್ಹ ಮತ್ತು ಅನುಭವ ಹೊಂದಿರುವ ಹಾಗೂ ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕ ಇಲಾಖೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ನೊಂದಾಯಿಸಲ್ಪಟ್ಟ ಹೊರಗುತ್ತಿಗೆ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳಿಂದ ಪಡೆಯಲು ಟೆಂಡರ್ (ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: KPSC/2026-27/SE0036) ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದ್ದು, ಆಸಕ್ತ ಮತ್ತು ಅರ್ಹ ಬಿಡ್‌ದಾರರು https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಬಹುದು. ಸದರಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ:15-07-2026ರ ಸಂಜೆ 5.00 ಗಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ ನಿಗದಿಪಡಿಸಿದೆ. ಈ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಯನ್ನು ಕಛೇರಿಯ ವೇಳೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಆಯೋಗದ ದೂರವಾಣಿ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 080-30565802 ಮೂಲಕ ಪಡೆಯಬಹುದು.

ಕಾರ್ಯದರ್ಶಿಯವರ ಆದೇಶದ ಮೇರೆಗೆ,
(ಸಹಿ/-)
ಸಹಾಯಕ ಕಾರ್ಯದರ್ಶಿ(ಪ್ರ)
ಆಡಳಿತ ಶಾಖೆ
ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಲೋಕಸೇವಾ ಆಯೋಗ

ಪ್ರಾ.ಸಂ.ಇ/ಪಾಪ್ರ/1427/ಆಕರ್/2026-27

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Office of the Executive Engineer, PWD Bengaluru Division, 2nd Floor, PWD Annexure Building, K.R. Circle, Bengaluru-01. Phone: 080-22133370

No. 11/2026-27 Date: 30.06.2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

Item-rate tenders, for the work in PWD, **Doddaballapura & Nelamangala** Sub Division under this office noted below, are invited by the undersigned on behalf of the Governor of Karnataka in accordance with Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement rules 2000 and as per Standard Tender Documents for procurement of works from the contractors registered in K.P.W.D. as per KPPP.

Tender Notification are Published **for 03 Works (Rs. 250.00 Lakhs to Rs. 350.00 Lakhs).** Details of the tender works can be obtained from the above Office during office hours on working days. **EMD & Tender processing fees are mentioned in KPP portal.**

(1) Tenders must be submitted online through KPP portal on or before **4.00 PM on Dated: 16.07.2026. (2)** The opening of tenders through KPP portal on **Dated: 17.07.2026 at 4.30 PM** or further date and time will be Intimated.

For more details contact this office.

Sd/- Executive Engineer.

DIPR/DD-C.P/1421/KSMCA/2026-27

TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | THURSDAY, JULY 2, 2026

ILLUSORY JOY IS OFTEN WORTH MORE THAN GENUINE SORROW
—RENE DESCARTES

JURY ORDERS R&B STAR CHRIS BROWN TO PAY $13M RELIEF TO HIS HOUSEKEEPER AS SHE WAS MAULED BY HIS DOG IN 2020

OLIVIA WILDE REVEALS WALTON GOGGINS SAVED HER FROM BEING STAMPEDED TO DEATH BY HORSES ON A FILM SET: 'I OWE HIM MY LIFE'

Iran, Oman advance plans for Hormuz transit fees: Report

Move Comes Amid Public Objections From Washington

Washington: Plans to introduce payments for vessels transiting the strategic Strait of Hormuz are being advanced by Iran and Oman despite public objections from Washington, according to a report published by The New York Times.

The implementation of the proposal would represent a major shift from the pre-war status of the critical waterway, where merchant ships had historically transited free of charge between the two coastal nations while ferrying oil and gas supplies from the Persian Gulf to international markets.

During the hostilities earlier this year, Iran enforced an effective blockade on the Strait of Hormuz, throwing one of the most vital maritime trade corridors into chaos and driving global energy costs significantly higher. Following the conflict, Iranian authorities have consistently vocalised their intentions to monetise the channel.

According to the report, a formal proposal has been submitted by Oman to the US, alongside other Western allies, outlining a framework under which maritime transport firms would tender service fees to traverse the Strait of Hormuz. Speaking to the NYT, a person familiar with the US position stated that American negotiators had received the document and intended to discuss their concerns with Omani authorities.

The person and a regional diplomat indicated that the text referred to voluntary service fees rather than mandatory tolls. Conversely, an Iranian official stated that the payments would be compulsory.

The future governance of the Strait of Hormuz continues to be a central talking point in ongoing deliberations between Washington and Tehran aimed at securing a permanent peace treaty.

According to the regional diplomat, the framework designed by Oman draws inspiration from operational structures utilised in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, where a private foundation gathers voluntary contributions to fund maritime safety initiatives.

On Monday, Iran's deputy foreign minister, Kazem Gharibabadi, stated that the primary focus for Tehran was to cement an accord with Oman regarding the joint administration of the shipping lane. However, according to remarks carried by Iranian state television, Gharibabadi warned that Iran would proceed independently if Oman failed to agree on a bilateral framework. Oman has historically functioned as a diplomatic intermediary between the US and Iran, consistently attempting to preserve its neutrality amidst geopolitical friction in the region.

Following the emergence of reports in May indicating Oman had held discussions to partner with Iran on levying service fees in the channel, US President Trump warned he would bomb Oman if it did not "behave just like everybody else." Furthermore, Trump last week characterised the concept of gathering tolls or fees for transit through the Strait of Hormuz as "unacceptable." ANI

AFP

Israeli army tanks positioned along the Israel-Lebanon border on Wednesday

Israel: Troops to stay in Lebanon, Syria, Gaza

Israel's defence minister said on Wednesday that Israeli forces would remain in so-called security zones established in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza. "The IDF will remain in the security zones in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza until further notice, in order to protect Israel's residents and communities from terrorists," Israel Katz said, according to the defence ministry. "We will not withdraw from the security zones," Katz said at a function held in honour of Israeli soldiers killed during the 2006 war in Lebanon. Katz also reiterated an earlier warning to Iran, saying the Islamic republic would be struck with "full force" if it attacked Israel over its operations in Lebanon. AFP

US, Iran in technical talks to ink peace deal, shipping restart

The US and Iran held indirect technical talks in Doha on Wednesday as they seek to agree on the flow of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and secure a lasting ceasefire, a source with direct knowledge of the talks and an Iranian official said.

Iran is determined to win international recognition of its control over the Strait of Hormuz and its ability to levy fees on ships entering or leaving the Gulf, according to two senior Iranian sources.

US President Trump, meanwhile, told reporters on Wednesday that "the denuclearisation of Iran is moving along well", without giving details. "They've had very good meetings, and we'll see," he said of the talks in Doha. REUTERS

Bizman demolishes Pak gurdwara, govt orders restoration

Lahore: A decades-old historic gurdwara was demolished by a local businessman in Pakistan's Punjab province, sparking protests from the minority Sikh community, officials said on Wednesday.

"The businessman had demolished the gurdwara without obtaining the required no objection certificate from the department concerned," a govt official said. The official said Punjab chief minister Maryam Nawaz took notice of the matter following a protest by the Sikh community in the area. On Wednesday, Punjab minorities minister Ramesh Singh Arora visited the Gurdwara Singh Sabha in Farooqabad and announced its immediate restoration. PTI

World's oceans break June heat record: Monitor

Paris: The world's oceans experienced their hottest June on record and could set fresh highs in the months ahead as El Nino and climate change drive temperatures even higher, scientists said Wednesday. Global average sea surface temperatures in June were 20.98°C, beating the previous records of 2023 and 2024, according to the European Union's Copernicus Marine Service.

Average sea temperatures in the first half of the year were 20.04°C, slightly below the high set in the same period in 2024. And scientists said the onset of a potentially powerful El Nino weather pattern could boost global heat in the oceans and atmosphere even further in 2026 and into next year. AFP

Crypto pivot: Trump family biz led to a tactical reset with Pak

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: US President Donald Trump has gone from being a crypto sceptic to the industry's most influential political champion. During his first presidency, Trump famously declared he was "not a fan" of cryptocurrencies, describing Bitcoin as "based on thin air". Since returning to the White House, however, he has dismantled much of the Biden administration's regulatory crackdown, signed legislation promoting digital assets, and declared his ambition to make America the "crypto capital of the world".

The financial rewards have been enormous, with the disclosure attributing roughly $799 million in revenue to Trump's interest in World Liberty Financial (WLF), the decentralised finance company co-founded by Trump (he is listed as the "co-founder emeritus") and managed by his sons, Donald Trump Jr and Eric Trump.

The filing also records approximately $636 million from the sale of the $TRUMP meme coin, launched just days before his inauguration, together accounting for the overwhelming share of his new wealth. Another $600 million came through CIC Digital LLC from sales of Trump-themed meme coins and collectibles , while smaller but still notable sums flowed from Trump-branded Bibles, watches, sneakers and licensing agreements.

The White House insists there is no ethical issue because the president does not directly manage the businesses and that every administration decision is made solely in America's national interest. But critics argue that unlike previous presidents who divested assets or placed them in blind trusts, Trump remains the beneficiary of trusts run by his sons.

The controversy extends beyond ethics into foreign policy as it relates to the subcontinent. WLF has become intertwined with Pakistan's attempt to reinvent itself as a digital-finance hub after years of strained relations with Washington. Earlier this year, Pakistan's finance ministry and the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority signed an MoU with an affiliate of WLF to explore integrating the company's dollar-backed stablecoin, USD1, into Pakistan's regulated payment infrastructure. The project envisions using the stablecoin to facilitate billions of dollars in remittances and cross-border transactions.

The signing ceremony in Islamabad carried symbolism that went far beyond cryptocurrency, with PM Shehbaz Sharif, finance minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Pakistan army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir and WLF chief executive Zachary Witkoff, son of Trump's close friend and West Asia envoy Steve Witkoff, in attendance.

For Islamabad, the partnership represents more than financial innovation. By embracing a venture associated directly with Trump's family, its policymakers also appear to have pulled off a broader tactical reset with Washington, a remarkable reversal from Trump's first term. During his presidency from 2017 to 2021, Trump accused Pakistan of giving the US "nothing but lies and deceit", suspended hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid, and repeatedly accused Islamabad of sheltering terrorists while accepting American aid.

These developments would be of concern in New Delhi, which has invested heavily over the past two decades in building a bipartisan strategic partnership with Washington based on defence cooperation, technology, supply-chain resilience and shared concerns over China. While Indian officials say these interests remain far deeper than any single commercial relationship, New Delhi's security establishment is stewing over whether Pakistan's growing role in Trump's crypto ecosystem translates into greater political access or influences US thinking on security issues in the subcontinent.

AP

Trump has become one of world's richest political beneficiaries of the cryptocurrency boom while in office

Trump admin calls birth tourism a threat. US data shows it is not

Lubna Kably | TNN

Following the verdict by the US Supreme Court upholding birthright citizenship, President Donald Trump has publicly stated that he will ask Congress to legislate on the issue.

This is not an entirely new idea. Republican lawmakers have already introduced the Birthright Citizenship Act of 2025, sponsored by Lindsey Graham in the Senate and Brian Babin in the House, which seeks to limit automatic citizenship to children with at least one US citizen or lawful permanent resident parent. The bill has not become law.

The Trump administration has repeatedly cited birth tourism to justify its attempt to restrict birthright citizenship. In the light of Trump's public statement immigration experts point out that when the issue came up during oral arguments before the SC, govt's lawyer acknowledged there are no definitive figures on how widespread the practice actually is. Asked by a judge whether there was any information on "how common" or "how significant" birth tourism was, Solicitor General D John Sauer replied: "No one knows for sure."

Birth tourism refers to foreign nationals travelling to the US on visitor visas primarily to give birth so that their child acquires US citizenship under the 14th Amendment. The practice has long drawn criticism from immigration hawks and has been the subject of visa fraud investigations. "There is no doubt that the practice of foreign

NOT SO COMMON

women coming to the US for the purpose of giving birth to get US citizenship for their babies constitutes fraud and is a misuse of the immigration system," said Michelle Mittelstadt, director of communications and public affairs at the Migration Policy Institute in a post on social media. However, she argues that the scale of the problem should be viewed in context.

According to US govt data cited by Mittelstadt, fewer than 10,000 of the more than 3.5 million births recorded in the US in 2024 were to women who listed foreign addresses. While she acknowledges this could undercount birth tourism, she adds that even the broadest estimate by the Center for Immigration Studies, a conservative think-tank, places the number at about 26,000 births annually, or well under 1% of all births. Mittelstadt also contends that birth tourism can be tackled without altering the constitutional guarantee of birthright citizenship. She points to stricter screening of pregnant visa applicants, tougher investigations targeting intermediaries who organise birth-tourism packages, airline travel policies, and stronger penalties including future visa bans for those found to have misrepresented the purpose of their travel.

Rekha Sharma-Crawford, Kansas based, immigration attorney pointed out that while the Trump administration has said that birth tourism is all the rage, this was addressed at the oral argument. "Here, not only did the government not convince the Court it was a problem, but they also could not even say there was an actual problem," she said.

Venezuela quake toll nears 2,000; 3-year-old rescued from rubble

La Guaira (Venezuela): Tens of thousands of people desperately sought food and shelter in Venezuela on Tuesday after the two earthquakes killed nearly 2,000, but rescue teams managed to pull a 3-year-old boy alive from the rubble six days after the shocks.

Hopes were fading fast for more rescues, but nearly a week after the quakes, a Jordanian civil defence team dug the three-year-old boy from the wreckage of a house. Video footage showed rescue workers cheering with joy on discovering the child, whose vital signs were good, the Jordanian civil defence said.

The critical 72-hour window during which survivors were still likely to be found closed on Saturday evening.

Six days after the shocks, the UN refugee agency said "food shortages are widespread, basic services have broken down and connectivity has been largely severed" in the port city of La Guaira — the worst hit area north of the capital Caracas. "They give out supplies, but sometimes people nearly kill each other for food...it's like a cockfight," said Daniela Armas, 18, a vendor in La Guaira who was injured falling from a motorbike during the quakes.

In a daily update, Venezuela's National Assembly president Jorge Rodriguez said deaths had risen to 1,943, with more than 10,500 injured. He said nearly 6,500 people had been rescued from the rubble in La Guaira, but that number was likely closer to 20,000 including those who escaped or were helped out by family. AFP

Reuters

The rescued child receives emergency attention in Caracas

TOI LINE OF NO CONTROL — SANDEEP ADHWARYU

Apartment fire in Belgium leaves at least 6 dead: Police

Antwerp: At least six people were killed and many others injured on Wednesday in a fire at an apartment block on the outskirts of the Belgian city of Antwerp, police said. The blaze was caused by a technical failure on the ground floor of the building, where more than 200 people live in 80 apartments, in the city's Linkeroever neighbourhood, sending vast plumes of smoke into the air, Antwerp police said in a statement.

The top floors of the 10-story block appeared worst hit. Firefighters battled the blaze in difficult conditions due to its size and intensity, police said. Several teams of first responders and police were dispatched to the site, including a specialised drone unit. A medical emergency plan was activated to keep the victims from saturating nearby hospitals. Belgium has experienced a series of severe blazes in the past weeks, including one in a warehouse in Brussels. AGENCIES

Reuters

Rescuers evacuate a person from the site of a fire in Antwerp

Officials: Spain saw 1,000+ heat-related June deaths

Madrid: More than 1,000 deaths in Spain were attributed to the recent heatwave that roasted Europe, as the country posted the hottest first six months ever recorded, officials said on Wednesday. At least 1,028 people died of heat-related issues during the heatwave, the public Carlos III Health Institute said.

The figure was more than double the 407 deaths that were attributed to heat in June 2025, Spain's hottest June since records started being kept, according to the national weather agency Aemet.

The first six months of 2026 were the hottest in Spain since the start of records, with temperatures 1.6C above normal levels on average, Aemet said in a post on X on Wednesday. "The seven warmest first semesters... have occurred over the past 10 years", the Aemet agency said in a post on X. June 2026 came in as the second-hottest June, "with temperatures on average 3.2C above the norm," Aemet said.

The heatwave that scorched Europe from late June was the most severe ever recorded in Europe, the World Weather Attribution group of scientists said. All-time temperature records were been broken in Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, as well as for the month of June in the UK and in Switzerland. AFP

Sony to stop releasing PlayStation game discs

Sony said Wednesday that it would stop releasing new video games for the PlayStation on disc in Jan 2028 following a shift in consumer preferences. "Following this date, new games will be available on PlayStation Store and at retailers in digital formats only," the firm said on its official PlayStation blog.

In practice that means gamers will have to download directly from Sony's PlayStation store or will obtain a download code when purchasing a title from a retailer.

The announcement comes as the upcoming exclusively digital release of "Grand Theft Auto VI", which is predicted to become the biggest-selling cultural product of all time, has caused some consternation among gamers.

There was grumbling on social media that the lack of a physical disc would eliminate any second-hand market for the title. Sony said the upcoming shift "has no impact on games that already released, or will be releasing, prior to January 2028 in disc format."

Sony began its move towards digital downloads in 2020 with the release of the latest console, PlayStation 5, which had a version without a disk drive. "This is a natural direction for Sony Interactive Entertainment to adapt to consumer trends," the company said. AFP

Degrees of denial: Paris blames US for climate change in heated exchange

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: Welcome to Planet Barbecue, where the latest transatlantic spat between the US and Europe comes via Paris – with heat – courtesy the city's deputy mayor, Audrey Pulvar, who is blaming Americans and their enthusiastic love affair with air conditioning, for helping cook France.

Amid much snickering in America about France's sparse air conditioning during 43°C temperatures this week, Pulvar fired back that the US, the world's largest per capita greenhouse gas emitter, which has spent decades treating the atmosphere like an all-you-can-eat carbon buffet, bears considerable responsibility for the warming that has left France counting more than 1,300 deaths in a few weeks.

"Dear American journalists and social media 'influencers': for days, some of you have been criticising and making fun of Paris because the city does not have AC in every room…OMG, this is so rich!…Your cities, which are 90% air conditioned, are not unrelated to this …So please, enough with the lecture. Start doing your part," Pulvar wrote on social media.

France has long been resistant to air conditioning, with only 25% of households in the country equipped with such cooling units compared to 90% in America – a stat the US wears with pride. "The reality is that no amount of French sweltering in the heat will make a real dent in the global climate. The politicians in Paris might have a cultural resistance to air conditioning, but as the mercury rises, European voters might soon decide that cooling off is better than green self-righteousness," sneered the WSJ, coming to America's defence.

Reuters

People cool off in the Trocadero Fountain next to the Eiffel Tower as temperatures rise during a heatwave in Paris in June

But while France and much of Western Europe is melting like cheese left on a dashboard, the US itself is preparing to celebrate the Fourth of July by shooting record-breaking fireworks into an atmosphere that's already becoming a convection oven. Temperatures are expected to top 40°C over the weekend, roasting half the country under another oppressive heat dome.

While American conservatives say Pulvar may have overcooked her case by blaming America's addiction to air conditioning, progressives acknowledge the inconvenient part: the atmosphere doesn't care about ideology or political beliefs. On the larger point – that emissions are turning Earth into a slow cooker – experts concede Pulvar has considerably more science on her side than the man who wears heavy dark suits and an extra-long tie in peak summer and who treats climate change like an optional belief system.

Donald Trump, by most accounts, looks at climate science the way toddlers view vegetables: if you don't like it, pretend it doesn't exist. He has called climate change a hoax, mocked concerns about warming during winter cold fronts, and joked that rising seas simply mean "more oceanfront property." That, critics say, is like watching your kitchen burn down and announcing you've solved the lighting problem.

The US itself has been here before – Chicago's infamous 1995 heatwave claimed more than 700 lives, and the Pacific Northwest's astonishing 2021 heat dome killed hundreds. Last July, temperatures at Reagan National Airport just outside Washington DC touched 40°C, matching a record set decades earlier, one expected to be toast this weekend, endangering even World Cup football games.

And what is Washington doing about all this? Exactly what Washington always does – shuffling around fully dressed in dark wool suits and neckties. Only in the US capital could thousands of highly educated adults collectively decide that the proper attire on a hot day is the wardrobe of a Victorian undertaker. Cabinet members visiting India in peak summer, perspiring with patriotic determination, have adopted the same dress code, as though wool somehow intimidates the sun.

The irony in the Paris-Washington spat is that air conditioning itself has become less a luxury than a survival tool in many parts of the world. The challenge, reasonable climate experts say, is not whether to use it, but how to power it without further stoking the furnace.

Cleaner electricity, greener cities, better insulation and smarter buildings will accomplish infinitely more than trading snarky, heated posts across the Atlantic because nature always gets the final punchline. After all, on Planet Barbecue, it doesn't matter who started the fire once everyone is on the menu.

DAILY PLANET

2 people unfurl peace banner atop NY's Empire State Building in a 'proposal stunt'

Two people climbed to the very top of the Empire State Building's towering spire in New York City on Wednesday to unfurl a large banner urging world peace in what soon appeared to be an elaborate marriage proposal. The pair, dressed in sleeveless black outfits, hung onto the landmark skyscraper's antenna spire near the glowing red light at its top some 1,454 feet above the sidewalk of midtown Manhattan. They held a black banner with a message in all-capital white letters that flapped in the wind: "When the power of love beats the love of power the world knows peace." It was not immediately clear who the two people were, nor when or how they got up there.

France starts extra parental leave to boost birth rates

France on Wednesday launched new paid leave for both mothers and fathers, as President Macron seeks to boost the country's sluggish birth rate. Until now, paid maternity leave in France has been just under four months for a first child, while fathers have been entitled to 28 days of leave. Under the new rules, mothers and fathers can now share an additional leave of one or two months on top of existing entitlements. Parents will receive 70% of their net salary during the first month and 60% during the second.

GOAL RUSH

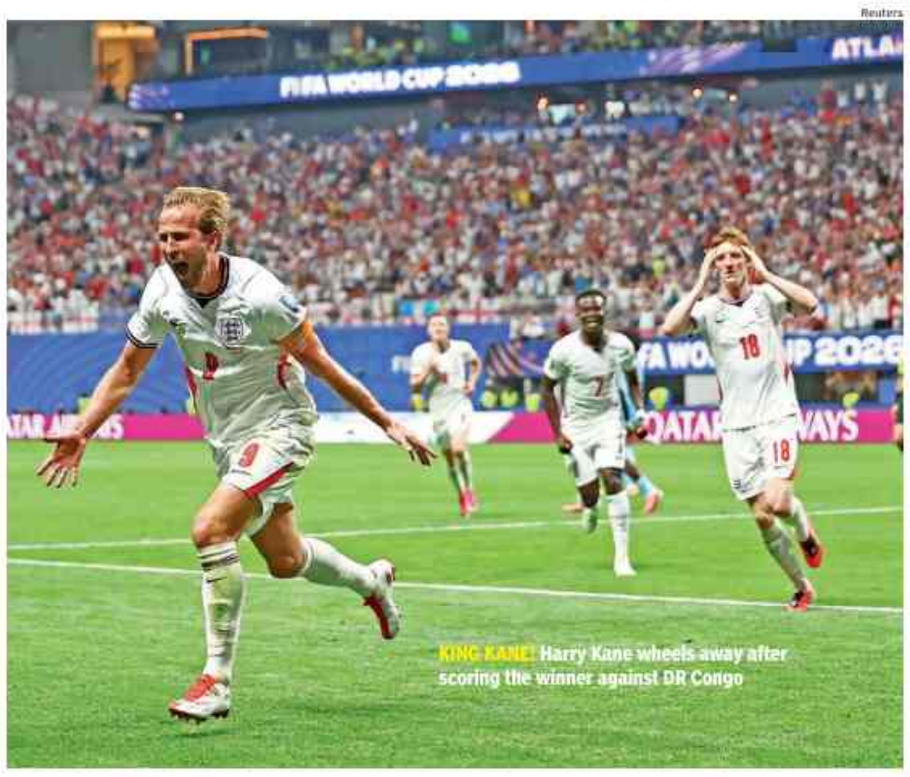
11 Jun 2026 – 19 Jul 2026

TIMES SPORT | THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU
THURSDAY, JULY 2, 2026

"FRANCE HAVEN'T BEATEN US SINCE THE EUROS. THEY CAN'T BE BETTER THAN US. OBVIOUSLY, FRANCE IS COMING IN AT A VERY HIGH LEVEL. THEY HAVE GOOD PLAYERS, BUT I DON'T THINK THEY'RE ABOVE ANYONE."

— LAMINE YAMAL, SPAIN WINGER

HARRY'S HOUDINI ACT



Reuters

KING KANE! Harry Kane wheels away after scoring the winner against DR Congo

Kane Double Rescues England In Comeback Win Over DR Congo

Atlanta: Harry Kane rescued England from a seismic World Cup shock with two late goals to beat the Democratic Republic of Congo 2-1 in Atlanta and secure a place in the last 16.

Aiming to end a 60-year wait to win a major tournament, Thomas Tuchel's men escaped humiliation and one of England's worst ever World Cup exits thanks to their talismanic captain after Brian Cipenga's early goal gave Congo an early lead. But the Three Lions will need to improve for the daunting task of facing co-hosts Mexico at the Estadio Azteca in the last 16 on Sunday.

Already England's all-time top goalscorer in the competition, Kane now has 13 World Cup goals and moves onto five for the tournament to remain in the star-studded battle for the Golden Boot.

Defeat ended Congo's fairytale run on their return to the World Cup for the first time in 52 years. The Leopards had never even won a point or scored a goal at the World Cup until a few weeks ago, but had one of the favourites teetering on the brink of elimination.

Tuchel made two changes from victory over Panama as Declan Rice return in midfield, while Djed Spence came in at right-back with Reece James and Jarell Quansah both ruled out through injury. The German coach's decision not to select more specialist right-back cover in a 26-man squad will face more scrutiny after Congo took the lead down that flank.

Spence was caught under Chancel Mbemba's cross as the ball fell for Cipenga. The Almeria winger's shot was low and hard but Jordan Pickford should still have kept it out at his near post.

ENGLAND Kane 75, 86	2
DR CONGO Cipenga 7	1

13 World Cup goals by Kane, moving him past Pele to No. 6 in the all-time scorers' list

The vast majority of the nearly 70,000 crowd decked out in England red and white were silenced, while Tuchel's players were visibly rattled.

Kane was furious when he went down as he tried to round Mpasi but the referee refused to point to the spot.

After a bright start to the second period, England were beginning to run out of ideas until Tuchel unloaded his offensive weapons off the bench. Bukayo Saka, Anthony Gordon and Eberechi Eze were sent on by Tuchel in search of an equaliser. AFP

TIME TO ASK APOLLO

CLARITY
Complex medical information, explained simply so you can make better decisions.

Scan to Ask Apollo

For any Health Query Chat with Ask Apollo

Apollo AI Clinical excellence for healthier India

Apollo 24|7

The French are here, the rest are fried!

Mbappe, Olise, Dembele and Barcola Form A Foursome That Strikes Fear In Hearts Of Rivals

▶Continued from P1

If followers of today's tactics-driven, systems-first football — scantly aware of the poetry of Brazil's artistes in 1970, blissfully oblivious of the astonishing goal machine that was the Hungary's Magical Magyars of the 1950s — need a ready reckoner on the sharp, subtle beauty of a '*jeu collectif*', that proverbial team game, just tune in to Mbappe and Co at this World Cup.

Operating on a different plane, their individuals lending a scary efficiency to the collective, *Les Bleus* are in that happy space, the kind we football tragics yearn for, love to fill our lungs with, a jubilant, unflappable atmosphere where the game keeps returning and reinventing itself as a gift of life.

"My players are on a mission," Deschamps later said, "And I'm on a mission with them."

However, the story of this Les Bleus is not about Mbappe alone. It's about how he grows with his leadership and how the group keeps conquering one challenge after another with consummate ease. It's about how Deschamps is allowing his attacking quartet of Mbappe, the pacy Ousmane Dembele, the razor-sharp Michael Olise and deceptively dangerous Bradley Barcola to run the show with freedom in an entertaining 4-2-3-1 formation.

Dembele has got a hat-trick and been involved in two game-altering assists, but it is the rise — and rise — of Olise that is sending the world in raptures. Born in London to a Nigerian father and a Franco-Algerian mother, his grasp of French still iffy, Olise has been conducting France's attacking charge with a creative genius that is new-age as it is delightfully old school. Apart from an eye for that delicious invisible gap, his exquisite bicycle kick attempt against Sweden was already the almost goal of the tournament, the kind that helps one move into the Golden Ball picture.

Deschamps has simply allowed it to flow unhindered. His fearsome foursome play with a panache so mythical that it's quick to evoke comparisons to France's famed 'Le Carre Magique' of the early 1980s — the Magic Square of Michel Platini, Jean Tigana, Alain Giresse and Luis Fernandez.

After been at the receiving end of this brilliance, Swedish forward Viktor Gyokeres gave a first-hand insight into Deschamps' dazzlers. "They come in different positions. They're not static. They know each other well in how they move and their connection between each other," he ruefully, but rightfully noted.

"I personally haven't seen a better team." Sweden coach Graham Potter's assessment was simple and more devastating.

FRANCE Mbappe 45, 74, Barcola 53	3
SWEDEN	0

Having already been a World Cup winner and missing the title by a whisker in 2022, Mbappe represents a French side on an exhilarating ride, creating fresh legacies even as they emulate old glitter. It's as much about discipline as dedication to the cause.

Mbappe was so obsessed with his goal that at just three years, he had already learnt to recite the La Marseillaise, just to be ready to belt it at his maiden call-up for the Bleus. This mentality was in evidence again at Monaco as a teenager. Tasked with an assignment to design a magazine with the team on the cover, Mbappe chose the cover of Time with a headline '*El Maestro*'.

Dembele might have filled the void that Mbappe left at PSG, and under Luis Enrique's guidance, reinvented himself as an inside-moving centre-forward. But such a makeover was far from easy. Having debuted under Deschamps a decade ago, Dembele's career — troubled by injuries and off-field issues — has been one of endurance.

France under Deschamps — a World Cup winner as player and manager — are benefitting from such tales of grit.

"We are much more offensive than in 2018 and in 2022," Mbappe remarked off-handedly. "It's the continuity of what we started to build throughout Didier Deschamps' tenure over the last 14 years. You can see the evolution, his personal touch, and the arrival of a lot of young talent."

There's nothing stifling about it and everything's emotionally cleansing.

Reuters

UNSTOPPABLE FORCE: Mbappe (10) and Olise (right) celebrate France's first goal

GOLD STANDARD: Pele (second left), Jairzinho (left) and their Brazilian teammates rejoice during the 1970 World Cup final against Italy in Mexico City

FRANCE IN ELITE COMPANY

The French frontline of Kylian Mbappe, Ousmane Dembele, Michael Olise and Bradley Barcola, along with Desire Doue, has been the talk of this World Cup. The 13 goals scored by them have been shared by the four, with Mbappe hitting 6, Doue 1, Dembele 4 and Barcola 2. They are now being compared to the best attacking lines of all time. TOI takes a look at some of the best who have taken past World Cups by storm...

Brazil (1970) | Pele, Jairzinho, Tostao and Rivelino, along with midfield maestro Gerson, arguably the **greatest attacking line-up of all time.** Coach Mario Zagallo was able to fit in all four, sometimes playing an ultra-aggressive 4-2-4. **The system depended on Pele and Tostao's ability to fall deep** and create, while the other two manned the two wings, being equally adept at scoring goals. **16 of the 19 goals** in that WC were shared by the four.

Hungary (1954) | The Ferenc Puskas-led attack had Nandor Hidegkuti, Sandor Kocsis and Zoltan Czibor. They played **some of the most attractive football the WC has seen.** Puskas was at the heart of it all as the Hungarians scored 27 goals. **In a massive upset,** they lost to Germany 2-3 in the final, an incident referred to as **'The Miracle of Bern'.**

Brazil (2002) | Ronaldo, with eight goals, was the heart and soul of this Brazilian front-three. **Rivaldo and Ronaldinho** could tear open defences with their mazy runs and outstanding vision, while the **marauding full-backs Roberto Carlos and Cafu** often made it a front-five that went on to **win Brazil's fifth world title.**

The Netherlands (1974) | The team that gave birth to 'Total Football', with **Johan Cryuff playing the false-nine** and creating spaces for the rest of the attack. They **went into the final with 14 goals** from six games, **but lost the final** to Germany 1-2.

Honourable Mentions | The 1982 Brazilian attack of **Zico, Socrates, Falcao, Serginho and Eder** didn't achieve the ultimate triumph, losing to Italy, but it was **one of the most potent attacking lines.**

> **Germany 2014 —** Mesut Ozil, Thomas Mueller and Miroslav Klose starred in a **7-1 rout of Brazil. The team won the WC.**

> **The 1994 Romanian front-line,** which had **Gheorghe Hagi,** was also a joy for the fans.

7 Jairzinho's goals for Brazil in their 1970 World Cup win.

8-3 Hungary's win against West Germany in the group game in 1954.

'Messi will score more but I want the trophy'

East Rutherford: Kylian Mbappe has been on Lionel Messi's heels as both players break new ground in World Cup scoring, but the Frenchman is more obsessed by lifting the trophy in New York on July 19 than becoming marksman supreme.

The 27-year-old netted a double as Les Bleus crushed Sweden 3-0 in the round of 32 on Tuesday to move one shy of Messi's record 19 goals at World Cups and join him on top of the scoring charts in this edition with six. "I think the goal, as I said, is to go as far as possible - o make it to (the final on) July 19th and come back here," Mbappe, who scored his 18 goals in 18 games, told reporters.

"We're trying to win; we're taking it one step at a time. Of course, the more goals you score, the higher you climb in the rankings - I'm not telling anyone anything new there.

"But I'm also convinced that Leo is going to score more goals, so I don't focus too much on that. I'm more focused on the opponents we might face and how close we're getting to our goal: the final."

Messi's Argentina face minnows Cape Verde in the last 32 on Friday. France next take on Paraguay for a place in the quarter-finals, where they would face either co-hosts Canada or Morocco.

"I'M CONVINCED THAT LEO IS GOING TO SCORE MORE GOALS, SO I DON'T FOCUS TOO MUCH ON THAT. I'M MORE FOCUSED ON THE OPPONENTS WE MIGHT FACE AND HOW CLOSE WE'RE GETTING TO OUR GOAL: THE FINAL." —Mbappe

2+ Kylian Mbappe has scored 2+ goals in seven different World Cup matches for France, three more than any other player.

Paraguay took an ultra defensive approach against Germany to knock the four-times world champions out on penalties in the last 32 on Monday and there is little chance that they will go out swashbuckling against France in Philadelphia on Saturday.

Les Bleus will not take anything for granted and will do their homework, Mbappe warned. "I think we'll keep working between now and the Paraguay match to see what we can improve, because there are still some sequences that aren't quite clear enough, there's room for improvement," he said. "Still, I think it's positive overall, and our ability to score goals means we always have the chance to take the lead in matches." REUTERS

THREE DIE OF ASPHYXIATION DURING MEXICO CELEBRATIONS

Mexico City: Mexican health authorities said Wednesday that three people died of asphyxiation during massive celebrations in downtown Mexico City after the national team's victory over Ecuador secured a place in the World Cup round of 16.

Two women and one man were found unconscious on streets near the iconic Angel of Independence monument, where thousands had gathered Tuesday night to celebrate, Mexico City's Health Secretariat said on the social platform X. The victims, who were not identified, were 48, 44 and 19 years old. AP

ECUADOR'S HINCAPIE BECOMES 2ND PLAYER TO BE SENT OFF FOR COVERING HIS MOUTH

Mexico City: Ecuador's Piero Hincapie became the second player to be issued a red card at the World Cup under FIFA's new rule that calls for a player to be sent off for covering their mouth during a confrontational exchange with an opponent. Hincapie was sent off in the 95th minute of Ecuador's loss to Mexico, following an exchange with Mexico forward Santi Giménez. Paraguay's Miguel Almiron was the first player to be punished. AP

Viking Haaland gallops to last 16 at the home of Cowboys

Brazil Next For Norway But Scandinavians Upbeat With Striker In Form

Arlington: Erling Haaland was described as "devastating" and "the greatest goalscorer in the world" after pouncing for a dramatic late winner for Norway at the World Cup. The Manchester City predator had a quiet afternoon at the home of the Dallas Cowboys before prodding home in the 86th minute for a thrilling 2-1 victory over the Ivory Coast.

IVORY COAST Diallo 74	1
NORWAY Nusa 39, Haaland 86	2

It was Haaland's fifth goal in three games in North America, having been rested for the 4-1 loss to France in the group phase. Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe, with six, have more goals so far here.

Haaland led the Norway squad on a rendition of their now-famous "Viking Row" celebration on the pitch and told broadcasters: "This is unbelievable. I can't swear, but it is unbelievable. This is history."

Haaland's goal gave Norway their first win in a World Cup knockout match and sent them into a last-16 showdown with Brazil. He has scored in each of his last 13 competitive internationals, scoring 25 goals in that run. Norway will be underdogs against Brazil but captain Martin Odegaard said with Haaland up front they always had a chance. "We're lucky to have him and it's just about giving him as many opportunities as possible," he said.

Stale Solbakken, Norway's coach, hailed the 25-year-old Haaland as "the greatest goalscorer in the world". "Today he wasn't that much involved. I think he had one big chance in the first half, and now he's scored the winning goal again," he said. "It brings a calmness to the team when you have a player like him, who is in my way very underrated in terms of keeping the ball. Because you see he didn't lose one ball today."

Amad Diallo, who had equalised for the Ivory Coast, said the powerful centre-forward needed no second chances. "I would say that the second goal was too easy," said the Manchester United winger. AFP

AFP

GOALS AS % OF BALL TOUCHES

	Player (Team, Year)	Touches	Goals	%
1	**Haaland** (Nor, 2026)	69	5	7.25%
2	**Salenko** (Rus, 1994)	100	6	6%
3	**G Ramos** (Por, 2022)	60	3	5%
4	**J Manzambi** (Swi, 2026)	68	3	4.41%
5	**A Morata** (Esp, 2022)	69	3	4.35%
6	**L Kiss** (Hun, 1982)	70	3	4.29%
7	**L Messi** (Arg, 2026)	155	6	3.87%

Quinones takes adopted country Mexico above and beyond

Mexico City: Julian Quinones did not grow up dreaming of scoring for Mexico at the Azteca, but on Tuesday his third goal at the World Cup set his side on their way to a 2-0 win over Ecuador that gave home fans more reason to believe that this is their year.

The Colombian-born forward has been a key figure in Mexico's run to the round of 16, as the co-hosts ended a 40-year wait for another knockout-stage victory at the tournament. The last time Mexico won a World Cup knockout match was a 2-0 win over Bulgaria at the same venue in 1986, with fans having to suffer the agony of watching talented teams come up short in the group stage or the first knockout round.

As Quinones drove Mexico forward, the chant that has followed the hosts rolled around the stadium again: "*Y si si?*" — roughly translated, "What if?"

It is a question loaded with decades of hurt. What if Mexico can go beyond the familiar ceiling? What if the fifth game is the start of something bigger?

Quinones has become the player Mexico looks to for the answers. Born in Colombia but forged in Mexican football, he has made this World Cup feel personal. Quinones led the way against Ecuador, unleashing a thunderous finish into the top corner for his third goal of the tournament.

In the group stage, he scored in the opener against South Africa, helped stretch South Korea in a tense 1-0 win in Guadalajara, then struck again against the Czech Republic. "My individual success stems from all the teamwork, and I'm always happy to wear this jersey," he said.

The 29-year-old built his career in Liga MX, became a champion with Atlas and Club America, and chose Mexico despite Colombia's interest.

For some, he is proof that belonging can be earned in sweat, goals and nights like this. For others, he is the forward Mexico have long needed: fast, direct, forceful, unafraid of the moment. REUTERS

MEXICO Quinones 22, Jimenez 31	2
ECUADOR	0

Reuters

8 Mexico have **won their first knockout round match** at the World Cup since defeating Bulgaria 2-0 in the round of 16 in **1986,** also at home, ending an **eight-match streak** of being eliminated in knockout-round matches, the longest such run in tournament history.

HIGH CLASS: Quinones gets the honours

2 Mexico are just the second team since 1994 to keep clean sheets in each of their first four matches of a World Cup after Swi in 2006, who went out (on penalties) in their fourth match despite not conceding a goal.

'Croatia get its strength from history'

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Croatia's record at the FIFA World Cup since finishing third for the first time in 1998, is bettered only by former champions France and Germany. In six editions, they've ended runners-up, have had two third place finishes and are now looking for another podium finish.

Given their unimpressive start, not many will be counting them among the favourites.

Now, up against Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal in the Round of 32, former Croatian centre-back and coach **Igor Stimac** believes Croatia will now show its true colours.

"There's no team that likes to face Croatia in the knockout stages of the World Cup," Stimac, now a commentator for broadcasters Zee5, told **TOI** over a recent video call. "That fear is normal when you are up against a side that has won three medals from six appearances. When it's the knockout stage, Croatia is most feared. We've seen in the past what happens when you underestimate us."

Stimac was part of Croatia's 1998 World Cup squad that famously finished third in 1998, a first for the country that was scarred by war and just seven years old as an independent nation. The result helped unite the nation.

In 2018 when he was a television expert, Stimac was faced with questions in Moscow that amused him.

"On the morning of the game, the guys running the (television) show asked me what Croatia can do against England in the semifinals. I told them it's a wrong question to ask. The question should be what England can do against Croatia?

TIME TROUBLE

RONALDO AND MODRIC STRIVE TO TURN BACK THE CLOCK AS PORTUGAL LOOK TO IGNITE CAMPAIGN AGAINST CROATIA

Atlanta: Cristiano Ronaldo and Luka Modric will make history when two outfield players aged over 40 face off for the first time in a World Cup as Portugal take on Croatia in Friday's last-32 clash.

But both men are facing questions over whether their status as national heroes is now more of a burden than a boost to their countries' hopes of progressing far in the competition. Prior to this tournament, only Cameroon's Roger Milla had played in a World Cup as an outfield player after turning 40. Ronaldo and Modric, who won four Champions Leagues in six seasons together at Real Madrid, have long defied Father Time but have shown their age in what will almost certainly be their final flourish on the global stage.

At 41, Ronaldo defiantly screamed "I'm back" after netting twice against Uzbekistan as he became the first player to ever score at six World Cups. Yet either side of a 5-0 romp over a team ranked 60th in the world, Portugal failed to beat the Democratic Republic of Congo and Colombia and fell into a tougher section of the draw as a result. "It's already 23 years I've been a professional and whenever things don't go well it's 'Cristiano, he's finished, he's old'," Ronaldo said earlier in the tournament. The forward played every minute of the group stages and outgoing Portugal boss Roberto Martinez shows no sign of taking the bold call to sit the five-time Ballon d'Or winner on the bench.

Round of 32
PORTUGAL VS CROATIA
4:30 am (Fri) Live on Zee5 and Unite8 Sports

"There is not an issue physically or mentally for Cristiano in today's game to play the 90 minutes," Martinez said after Ronaldo managed just two touches in the Colombia box. After a slow start to the World Cup four years ago, Ronaldo was eventually dropped by Fernando Santos in favour of Goncalo Ramos. The AC Milan striker immediately scored a hat-trick in a 6-1 demolition of Switzerland, but a 1-0 defeat to Morocco in the quarter-finals meant Ronaldo's time out of the side was short-lived and Santos was removed as coach.

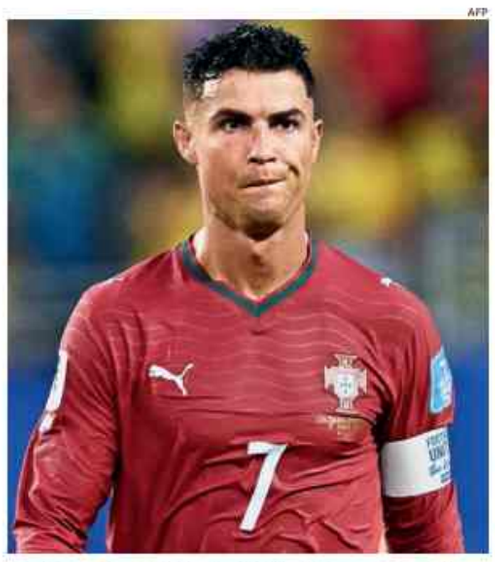
The impression that Martinez is wasting a richly talented generation just to protect Ronaldo's ego grows with every pedestrian performance.

Portugal's depth of midfield talent meant Paris Saint-Germain's Joao Neves and Bernardo Silva, now of Real Madrid, started on the bench against Colombia. Yet even with one of the World Cup's strongest midfields behind him, Ronaldo's strikes against Uzbekistan are his only non-penalty goals in his past 14 games at major tournaments.

Modric, 40, similarly showed his age in Croatia's tournament opener, which ended in a 4-2 defeat to England in Dallas. Caught on his heels, Modric conceded a penalty when chopping down Noni Madueke for England's opening goal and was sacrificed by Zlatko Dalic before the hour mark.

Croatia bounced back to celebrate Modric's 200th cap, edging past Panama 1-0.

In doing so, Modric became the fourth man to reach a double century of international appearances, joining Ronaldo. The AC Milan midfielder then provided the assist for Nikola Vlasic's winner as Croatia beat Ghana 2-1. Finalists in 2018, Croatia also reached the semi-finals four years ago. Modric was the driving force behind those incredible runs for a country of less than four million people. A likely last-16 meeting with Spain and one final shot at glory awaits the winners in Toronto. But for one of football's all-time greats, the World Cup curtain will come down in Canada. AFP

AFP


Reuters

Cristiano Ronaldo (top): 6th World Cup. 25 matches. 10 goals. **Luka Modric (right):** 5th World Cup. 23 matches. 3 goals. One Golden Ball. One silver medal. One bronze medal.

THE YOUNGEST WORLD CUP DEBUTANTS

Top-6 players by age to take the field...

Player / Team	Debut vs / Date	World Cup	Age
Norman Whiteside, Northern Ireland	vs Yugoslavia, 17 Jun 1982	Spain 1982	17y 41d
Samuel Eto'o, Cameroon	vs Italy, 17 Jun 1998	France 1998	17Y 99d
Femi Opabunmi, Nigeria	vs England, 12 Jun 2002	Korea/Japan 2002	17y 101d
Salomon Olembe, Cameroon	vs Austria, 11 Jun 1998	France 1998	17y 185d
Pelé, Brazil	vs USSR, 15 Jun 1958	Sweden 1958	17y 235d
Gilberto Mora, Mexico	vs South Africa, 11 Jun 2026	Canada/ Mexico/ USA 2026	17y 240d

NO FREEBIES, WARNS RUIZ

Chattanooga: Fabian Ruiz is confident Spain are gaining momentum as the European champions aim to end a 16-year hiatus to win a World Cup knockout game against Austria on Thursday.

One of the pre-tournament favourites, La Roja got off to a slow start with a 0-0 draw against Cabo Verde, but bounced back to beat Saudi Arabia and Uruguay to top Group H. Austria are expected to deploy a low block and daring Spain to break the deadlock. But they are unlikely to merely admire Spain's passing carousel. Ralf Rangnick's side have already made history by reaching the knockouts, but Spain's task is clear: keep the clean-sheet streak alive and prove they can unpick a defensive lock. Since winning the World Cup for the first time in 2010 during a run of three consecutive major tournament wins for a golden generation, Spain have struggled on the global stage. Eliminated at the group stage as defending champions in 2014, they crashed out on penalties to Russia and Morocco in the last 16 at the past two World Cups.

Round of 32
SPAIN VS AUSTRIA
12:30 am (Fri) Live on Zee5 and Unite8 Sports

Ruiz could be called upon for an unfamiliar role out wide with De la Fuente's options on the flanks decimated by injuries. Nico Williams and Yeremy Pino will miss the Austria clash after being injured in a bruising encounter with Uruguay. New Liverpool signing Victor Munoz has also not featured at the World Cup due to a muscle problem and Barcelona superstar Lamine Yamal's minutes have been carefully managed on his return from a hamstring injury.

Spain were left furious at the challenge that caused Williams another injury setback after a disrupted season. AFP

Swiss seek to break knockout curse

Vancouver: Reaching the World Cup round-of-16 has become something of a habit for Switzerland and they will aim to do so again when they face Algeria in the round-of-32 at BC Place on Thursday as the North Africans chase a first knockout-stage victory.

Competing at their sixth successive World Cup, Switzerland's consistency in qualifying has been matched by the predictability of their exits, with progress beyond the round-of-16 proving an enduring issue. They were eliminated at that stage in 2006, 2014, 2018 and 2022 and a group-stage exit in 2010 remains the lone exception in an otherwise consistent run to the knockout rounds.

The Swiss headed into the showpiece event encouraged by an impressive Euro 2024 campaign, when a penalty shootout defeat by England denied them a semifinal place. This time, they will believe they can finally break the curse, blending experienced leaders with emerging talent.

Manuel Akanji brings composure and title-winning experience from his time at Manchester City and the experienced Granit Xhaka anchors their midfield. Rising talent Johan Manzambi has been one of their shining lights, contributing three goals and an assist in his last three appearances, only one of which he started. Goalkeeper Gregor Kobel also underlined his quality in the 2-1 victory over co-hosts Canada that secured top spot in Group B.

That win earned Switzerland a seven-day break, giving coach Murat Yakin the opportunity to regroup and fine-tune his preparations. The team returned to their World Cup training base in San Diego to recover and train for the knockout phase. REUTERS

Round of 32
SWITZERLAND VS ALGERIA
8:30 am (Fri) Live on Zee5 and Unite8 Sports

SNAP SHOTS

ISHAN TOPS CHART

Ishan Kishan has displaced Abhishek Sharma from the top spot in the latest ICC men's T20I batting rankings. The rise for Kishan (876 ranking points) comes on the back of his consistent form at the T20 World Cup. Abhishek (869) held the top ranking for almost 12 months.

Test captaincy would be a privilege, says Brook: Harry Brook said it would be an honour to captain England's Test team if asked and believes he can handle the demands of leading his country across all three formats. "I don't think you can turn down being an England Test captain," Brook told reporters on Tuesday. "It would be an honour and a privilege to be Test captain."

Duffy returns: Seamer Jacob Duffy was named on Wednesday to play the upcoming five-match ODI series against the West Indies after sitting out New Zealand's 2-1 Test series win against England for the birth of his first child. Joining Duffy is uncapped 26-year-old speedster Matt Fisher.

Achutaditya & Arjun exit: The men's doubles pair of Achutaditya Rao Doddavarapu and Pochana Arjun suffered a first round exit from the Canada Open badminton tournament in Markham after losing 9-21, 7-21 to fifth-seeded home pair Kevin Lee and Ty Alexander Lindeman.

Santosh upsets Prempunpong: Dhyan Santosh upset sixth seed Punnatat Prempunpong of Thailand to lead a strong show by the Indian players in the first round of the Badminton Asia Junior Championships in Yatsushiro, Japan on Wednesday. Santosh beat Prempunpong 21-17, 21-18 in the boys' singles first round. Tanvi Patri eased past Indonesia's Christabel Purwanto 21-18, 21-6, while fifth seed Ruparelia defeated Sri Lanka's Pamudu Randiligama 21-13, 16-21, 21-7. Adarshini Shri defeated Lee Kay Xin of Malaysia 21-12, 21-12.

Indian pair in semis: India's top-seeded U-19 mixed doubles pair of PB Abhinandh and Divyanshi Bhowmick moved to the semifinal beating China's Yiren Tang and Yiyi Jiang 11-9, 11-6, 11-7 at the Asian Youth Table Tennis Championships in Bangkok on Wednesday.

Deepak, Karthi shine: Deepak and Karthi bagged a hat-trick each for KGF FC, who beat Revolts FC 7-3 in the KSFA 'D' Division football league championship in Bengaluru on Wednesday. **Results:** KGF 7 (Deepak 12, 17, 24, Karthi 18, 29, 39, Prajwal 36) bt Revolts 3 (Vasanth 13, Mathew 31, Avinash 37); TFF 1 (Albert A 8) bt Mysore United 0; Rush 2 (Anirudh S 19, Shlok Rao 40) bt Ramamurthy Nagar 1 (Thavasi 45); Gajendra Nagar 1 (Rakesh 29) bt FC Real B'luru 0; Premier Sporting 2 (Ariek Thapa 37, 50+3-pen) bt Bangalore Saints 1 (Sireesh 33); Bangalore Panthers 3 (Samarth 10, 15, 19-pen) bt FCA B'lore 1 (Emmanuel A 38); Hydra FC bt Plan C (w/o).

Efficacy wins feature: Efficacy, ridden by Shreyas Singh, won the Stewards Trophy at the races in Mysuru on Wednesday.

Osaka's bold tennis, bolder look

TIMES OF INDIA AT WIMBLEDON

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Court No. 2 sits at one end of the All England Club, a few hundred metres from the players' facilities. For Naomi Osaka, that simply meant a longer runway. The four-time Grand Slam champion arrived on Wednesday in a downsized kimono-inspired look, accessorised with an obi that trailed behind her as she walked.

On a day when her tennis proved every bit as sharp as her fashion, Osaka powered past world No. 225 Anastasia Gasanova, firing eight aces in a 6-3, 6-2 win to reach the third round at Wimbledon.

After the toss, Osaka unclipped the obi before shrugging off her floral-applique bomber jacket to reveal an intricately crafted tennis dress with a curved, micro-pleated hem. It was the latest chapter in her Wimbledon wardrobe after she arrived for her first-round match on Monday in an elaborately designed kimono embroidered with cranes and cherry blossoms.

The thing about fashion is that while it can turn heads, it cannot move the scoreboard. And significantly, it creates expectations.

In tennis, a bold statement can draw as much scrutiny as admiration, and players are judged as readily for daring to stand out as they are for what they wear. The 28-year-old may not be consumed by doubt, but she is not immune to the noise from the locker room and beyond. Whatever story she chooses to tell through fashion is ultimately amplified by her tennis. Every walk-on is a fashion show until the first ball is struck. After that, the outfit disappears and only the tennis remains.

"I do feel a little bit of nerves," she said. "Also I kind of want to make myself so used to that feeling that it doesn't bother me anymore. I think the Australian Open was me throwing myself head first into it with the umbrella and the hat and everything."

That willingness to lean into the spotlight is what sets Osaka apart.

American sixth seed Taylor Fritz, who arrived for his first-round match in an all-white blazer and trouser combination layered over his tennis clothes, admitted to the weight a player carries when making such an entrance. Fritz said, "you show up in a full outfit and get snipped in the first round, you look really stupid."

Pics: AFP

FASHIONABLE STATEMENT: Taylor Fritz (above) and Naomi Osaka

On one of her early trips to Japan, the 14th seed, was struck by Harajuku. A vibrant, pedestrian-only district in Tokyo that is synonymous with the capital's youth culture. "In Harajuku I saw everyone expressing themselves through clothes. It was so cool and colourful. That stuck out to me and I used that in my fashion experimentation," she said.

A couple of summers ago in New York, Harajuku influences shaped her elaborate US Open outfits. In Jan at Melbourne Park, she walked on court wearing a wide-brimmed hat beneath a blusher veil and carrying a white parasol.

The walk to the court may last a minute or more, but for Osaka, it is where the risk, the identity, and the performance begin.

Sinner battles past Borges

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London: Defending champion Jannik Sinner enjoyed a smoother passage into the Wimbledon third round, although his straight-sets victory over Portugal's Nuno Borges on Centre Court was not without its early wobbles.

Borges served for the second set at 5-4 before the Italian wrestled back control. Sinner recovered to seal a 7-6 (4), 7-6 (2), 6-4 victory and set up a third-round meeting with American Jenson Brooksby.

On Court No. 1, American Coco Gauff won the final six points of a gripping match tiebreak to book her place in the third round. The seventh seed raced through the opening set before losing her way midway through the contest against Argentina's world No. 56, Solana Sierra. Gauff recovered from 4-7 down in the deciding tiebreak to win 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (10-7).

Earlier, world No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka withstood a late challenge from McCartney Kessler. The American broke serve to lead 4-2 in the second set and held two set points in the 10th game before earning two more in the tie-break. But the top seed held her nerve to complete a 6-1, 7-6 (9) victory.

WIMBLEDON

Abhishek, Iyer shine

INDIA IN ENGLAND

Chester-le-Street: Abhishek Sharma waltzed to a dynamic 59 and skipper Shreyas Iyer made a composed 68 as India posted 189/7 against England in the first T20I here on Wednesday.

The T20I world champions, who opted to bat, lost Sanju Samson and Ishan Kishan with six runs on the board. Kishan was run out after a mix-up with Abhishek, who then slipped into his groove. Pacers Luke Wood and Mahmood were taken apart . Mahmood were carted around for 4, 6, 6 and Shreyas also found a four as India eked 21 runs off the fourth over.

The timing was a big part of the third wicket alliance that produced 82 runs in a little over seven overs, and it was evident in the way Abhishek handled Wood. Abhishek brought up his 50 off 20 balls. But he did not last long as Sam Curran trapped him in front.

However, Shreyas took over and notched up his ninth T20I 50. Shivam Dube (42 n.o, 21b) played a cameo to take India closer to 190.

Brief scores: India: 189/7 in 20 overs (Abhishek Sharma 59, Shreyas Iyer 68, Shivam Dube 42 n.o; Saqib Mahmood 3-33) **vs England.** PTI

India-B'desh cricket ties set to resume?

After nearly a year of strain in both diplomatic and cricketing ties, India and Bangladesh could be set to resume bilateral cricket, with prospects of a white-ball series in Sept looking bright. While the BCCI has not commented, a significant development emerged on Wednesday when the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) floated a tender for television and digital media rights covering its home international fixtures in 2026 and 2027. The document references India's proposed tour of Bangladesh next year, **reports Gaurav Gupta.** Circumstances prompted the BCCI to postpone a white-ball series last year, citing a packed calendar. Relations appeared to worsen, with Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman's non-involvement with Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL and Bangladesh later opting out of the 2026 T20 World Cup, citing security concerns. However, signs of a thaw have emerged. An indicator was the BCCI declining Sri Lanka Cricket's request to add three T20Is to India's tour of Sri Lanka later this year, potentially keeping a window open for Bangladesh fixtures. TNN

Himanshi claims title

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Himanshi Chowdhary eased past Sahana Murthy to clinch the women's singles title at the State ranking table tennis tournament in Mangaluru. The 17-year-old won 11-8, 11-6, 11-9, 11-13, 11-3. **Results: Women: Final:** Himanshi Chowdhary bt Sahana H Murthy 11-8, 11-6, 11-9, 11-13, 11-3; **Semis:** Sahana bt Trupti Purohit 13-11, 11-5, 15-13, 7-11, 11-13, 12-10; Himanshi bt Kushi V 12-14, 11-5, 10-12, 11-5, 11-9, 16-14.

Mustafa falters in final: Maharashtra's Aarav Sancheti overcame Mohammed Mustafa of Karnataka 6-4 to retain the junior boys' title in the Heyball National Championships in Dehradun. In the girls' section, Karnataka's Natasha Chethan advanced to the final with a 4-0 win against Delhi's Aleina Khanna. The defending champion will take on Padmakshee C in the final. **Results: Juniors (U-19): Boys: Final:** Aarav Sancheti (Mah) bt Mohammed Mustafa (Kar) 6-4. 3rd place: Aatif Ansari (MP) bt Arnav Sharma (HP) 3-3 (shootout). **Girls: Semis:** Natasha Chethan (Kar) bt Aleina Khanna (Del) 4-0; Padmakshee C (TN) bt Gianna Rego (Mah) 3-3 (shootout).

Phantom enter final: Bangalore Phantom FC defeated Young Gems FC 2-0 to enter the final of the BDFA 'C' Division league in Bengaluru on Wednesday. **Result (semi):** Bangalore Phantom FC 2 (W Dishan Singh 14, L Wanniang 45) bt Young Gems FC 0. On Saturday: Final: Gouthama vs B'lore Phantom (4 pm). TNN

Blasters pip Tigers

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hubballi: Bengaluru Blasters pulled off an exciting two-run win against Hubli Tigers to maintain their top spot in the Maharaja Trophy KSCA T20 tournament here on Wednesday.

Chasing 204 for victory, the Tigers fell short as they finished with 201/7. Needing 52 runs off 18 deliveries, Manvanth Kumar (60; 22b; 4x4; 6x6) kept them in the hunt. In the 18th over, Vidwath Kaverappa (2/55), conceded 20 runs as Manvanth scored back-to-back sixes. In the next over, 19 runs were scored, bringing down the equation to 13 runs from six balls. Nischith Rao (3/37) then struck with successive deliveries as he removed both the big hitters, Manvanth and Abhinav Manohar, to steer his team home.

MAHARAJA TROPHY

Earlier, powered by **Rohan Patil** (64; 38b) and Pravin Dubey (51; 28b), Blasters posted 203/7. The duo played a key role in building the innings after Rohan and Samit Dravid (32) added 70 runs for the second wicket.

Vaibhav Sharma (3/38) and Abhishek Ahlawat (2/39) were the pick of the Tigers' bowling attack.

Brief scores: Bengaluru Blasters: 203/7 in 20 overs (Rohan Patil 64, Samit Dravid 32, Pravin Dubey 51; Vaibhav Sharma 3-38, Abhishek Ahlawat 2-39) **bt Hubli Tigers 201/7 in 20 overs** (Aneeshwar Gautam 34, Shivkumar Rakshith 41, Manvanth Kumar 60; Nischith Rao 3-27 Vidwath Kaverappa 2-55).

Ton-up Rohit, Srithan shine

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Rohit Reddy (112) and Srithan V (178) powered Swastic Union Cricket Club (1) to a 175-run win via the VJD method against Bangalore United Cricket Club in the KSCA U-19 inter-club tournament here recently.

Chasing a revised target of 305 in 36 overs in the rain-affected match, BUCC were bowled out for 130. Opting to bat, Swastic lost Ayush Patil early, but Rohit and Srithan put the team back on track with their 274-run partnership for the second wicket. Earlier, SUCC made 377/5.

Brief scores: Swastic Union (1): 377/5 in 50 overs (Rohith Reddy 112 (111b, 12x4, 3x6), Srithan V 178 (127b; 11x4, 14x6), Sai Akhilesh B 33; Ujwal Gowda 3-34) **bt Bangalore United (1): 130 in 32 overs** (Aarav Adiga B 40; Suvik Gill 3-25, Devansh Joshi 2-23, Pavandeep Bharadakane 2-1) via VJD method. **Vijaya, Malur: 175 in 38 overs** (Om Agarwalla 58; Nikhil Gowda 3-40, Parth Patel 2-27, Navneeth Raj 2-34, Rohith KS 3-17) **bt Caravan Cricketers: 164 in 37.5 overs** (Gaurav Reddy 53, Navneeth Raj 30; Manish Patil 4-38). **Johnson: 230 in 44 overs** (Lingaraj 57, Taran MM 36, Mithun J 63; Siddharth Aryan 2-38, Daivik S 4-21) **lost to The Bangalore Cricketers: 234/4 in 35.3 overs** (Daivik S 100 n.o. (118b; 12x4), Namish P 38; Subhiksh Gowda 2-47). **Friends Union (1): 121 in 39.5 overs** (Rohith AA 45; Prathyush Shetty 3-9) **lost to Vultures: 122/1 in 15 overs** (Tejas Reddy 72 n.o., Eashan A 38). **Bharath: 236 in 50 overs** (Vedant Kumar 90, Shreyas Subramanya 43, Aadrith 29; Saksham Vishnoi 5-43, Roshan Naveen 2-42) **bt Visweswarapuram (2): 101 in 20 overs** (Rohan A 57, Aadrith 3-33, Samarth Patil 3-47, Tejas Subramanya 3-6). **Wilson Garden: 304/7 in 50 overs** (Krish Dhami 58, Manish Benjamin 50, Aditya Singh 90; Mani Hasith 2-32) **bt Freelancers: 129 in 31.3 overs** (KA Aayush 25; Sebastien 2-17, Vihaan Shivakumar 2-32, Ashish Rao 3-24, Mohith S 2-24). **Jayanagar United: 139 in 29 overs** (Aryan AC 27; Sidhanth Sunil 4-36, Purushotham Raghu 4-30, Vedanth Aradhya 2-23) **lost to Social Cricketers: 141/4 in 17.5 overs** (Sean Cyril 33, Amruthraj T 54 n.o.). **Malleswaram Gymkhana: 170 in 44.3 overs** (Govind Balaji 38; Bharatesh Gowda 2-40, Kushal Rathod 2-31, Nihaal Khan 2-12) **lost to Blue Diamond: 171/3 in 25.4 overs** (Supreet Neje 68, Tanish Yadav 64; Aarush Mishra 3-43). **Sapphire: 232/8 in 50 overs** (AR Samit 48, Ishaan Noel 53, Harishitgoud Totad 39; Sai Teja 2-38, Rushil Ram 2-61, Milan Dhami 2-29) **lost to Coles CC: 233/5 in 39.3 overs** (Chavanth Gowda 85, Arnav Kundap 36, Rushil Ram 32). **RVCE Gymkhana: 263/8 in 50 overs** (Ronel JP 79, Avaneesha SN 67; Pratham Raj 3-33, Charan Reddy 2-57, Amegh Verma 2-44) **bt Palar, Kolar: 173 in 39.2 overs** (Chiranth D 28, Krithin B 51; Praneel GM 3-25, Guha Nidudala 4-35). **Engrades: 254 in 47.3 overs** (Rahul GV 43, Aadrit Sengupta 59, Samvit Shastri 31, Mudassir 38; Gagan Kumar 3-41, Ritvik N 2-48, Aarav Panjanathan 2-17) **bt Hammonds: 123 in 23 overs** (Sai Dhyanesh 62; P Yateesh 2-22, Rahul GV 5-18). **Wadiyar: 284/6 in 50 overs** (Yuvaraj Kumar 81, Dushyanth Gowda 108 (129b; 13x4), Abhinav SS 50 n.o.; Debraj Nandi 3-34) **bt YMCA CC (3): 226 in 47.4 overs** (Debraj Nandi 32, Samarth P 63 n.o., Viresh Moktan 38; Likith R 2-36, Yaeesh Rahaman 3-31).

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THE TIMES

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ICC RANKINGS: ISHAN KISHAN DETHRONES TEAMMATE ABHISHEK SHARMA TO BECOME NO.1 T20I BATTER; AUSTRALIA'S TRAVIS HEAD RISES TO TOP IN TESTS P 16

Ayodhya cops: Stolen Ram temple cash was hidden in loo

Lucknow: Ayodhya police Wednesday said fresh disclosures by arrested accused Avinash Shukla revealed that cash allegedly stolen from donation collections at the Ram Temple was hidden in washrooms within the temple complex and later smuggled out in small amounts to avoid detection, **reports Pathikrit Chakraborty**.

According to police, Shukla allegedly told cops that those involved in the racket had studied the layout of the donation-counting centre, including CCTV camera locations, entry and exit routes, and staff movement patterns. The disclosures emerged, police said, during two hours of custodial interrogation inside the district jail on Tuesday.

Sources said investigators confronted Shukla with CCTV footage, witness statements and recovery records collected during the probe.

▶ **CCTV blind spots, P 9**

Board weightage mooted in entrance exam revamp

MoE Fast-Tracks Reforms Under PMO's Watch

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New Delhi: After a series of exam-related controversies, including the NEET-UG row, the Prime Minister's office (PMO) has stepped in to monitor sweeping examination reforms that the ministry of education is working on. The changes — being fast-tracked based on NEP 2020 recommendations — are being considered for both board exams and high-stakes entrance tests such as NEET and JEE, and propose up to 50% weightage for board marks in admission/merit, closer alignment of entrance tests with school syllabi to reduce dependence on coaching centres, multiple attempts, and a gradual shift towards adaptive on-demand computer-based tests.

Govt sources told **TOI** the immediate focus is on reducing the "high-stakes" nature of one-shot examinations, strengthening exam integrity and moving assessments towards CBT to minimise paper-handling risks. The approach adopted for the NEET-UG re-examination, where multiple govt agencies came together, is expected to become the template for future conduct of major national tests, they added.

The reforms have been recommended by MoE's nine-member committee set up in 2025 to examine students' dependence on coaching, the spread of "dummy schools" and fairness in high-stakes entrance tests. The panel's final report is likely to be submitted to govt in coming weeks. The committee has also recommended closer alignment of entrance tests with school syllabi.

▶ **Nodal agency, P 10**

Candidates allege spelling mistakes, poor translation in UGC-NET sociology paper

Candidates who appeared for the UGC-NET exam on June 30 allege the sociology paper was riddled with spelling errors, garbled names of key thinkers, awkward Hindi translations and questions that appeared disconnected from the prescribed syllabus. Candidates alleged that names and terms central to sociology were mangled: "Ritzer" appeared as "Putzer", "social" as "oval", "Parsons" as "Parsow", "Ghurye" as "Ghunye", "A R Desai" as "A K Desai" and "Nussbaum" as "Nusbaut". They said it was a result of poor paper-setting and inadequate quality checks in a national eligibility examination conducted by NTA. TNN

Gruha Jyothi survey: Caste, PAN queries spark exclusion fears

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Bengaluru: The state govt's ongoing door-to-door verification of consumers under the Gruha Jyothi scheme has sparked a controversy after the energy department's checklist sought details of beneficiaries' caste and PAN, among other information.

As part of the verification drive, under way from July 1 to Aug 31, officials have been instructed to collect information from beneficiaries under 11 categories. Inclusion of caste and PAN details in these categories has raised concern among consumers, with many questioning whether this could eventually be used to restrict benefits to specific communities or income groups.

While energy minister K J George defended the move, saying there's nothing wrong in it, energy department officials clarified that disclosure of PAN and caste details is only optional. The clarification notwithstanding, consumers are sceptical. "None of the guarantee schemes required beneficiaries to disclose their caste, when those were launched. So, why is the govt asking for it now?" asked a beneficiary from Jayanagar.

▶ **'They can choose', P 3**

IT'S OPTIONAL: DEPT

- Power **consumers fear information could be used to restrict benefits** to certain communities, income groups
- State energy department clarifies **sharing caste and PAN details is optional**
- Officials also assure PAN details **won't be used to exclude income-tax payers**
- **July power bills will be based on average power consumption**, with Escom officials busy with survey work

GBA officials clear 76km of footpaths on Day 1 of anti-encroachment drive

Hamsaveni N & Sanjay R Murty

Bengaluru: GBA's mission to reclaim footpaths for pedestrians gathered pace on Wednesday, with officials clearing encroachments along 76km of arterial roads on the first day of the drive.

The campaign follows directions from Bengaluru development minister Krishna Byre Gowda. Vendors have been asked to shift to inner roads, including sub-arterial and ward roads, while keeping major roads free for pedestrian movement.

▶ **FULL COVERAGE: PAGE 2**

The move comes amid **TOI**'s Walk-o-Meter series, which assesses footpaths across city corporations for walkability, safety and accessibility. On Wednesday, civic teams deployed earthmovers and tractors to remove permanent and semi-permanent structures erected along footpaths. Shop extensions spilling onto pedestrian spaces were demolished, while vehicles parked on footpaths were towed away.

The city is yet to officially notify vending zones or issue vending certificates despite surveys being conducted in recent years. Vendor groups have warned of protests if the evictions continue without rehabilitation measures.

TOI

Several vendors argued that they depended on these locations for their daily livelihood and had not been provided alternative spaces

IDEAS FOR INDIA

India's biggest challenges are those within. What will it take to transform a country with abundant promise and an abundance of problems? **TOI's Ideas for India initiative, in partnership with Optum, asks and tries to answer the most crucial questions.** Starting today, in a series of analyses from thought leaders, Ideas for India will showcase best practice recommendations on a wide range of crucial subjects, offering practical solutions that are both interesting and important | **P 9**

Bus catches fire after collision, 8 die

Eight sleeping passengers were killed when a private bus collided with a multi-axle trailer truck on the Delhi-Mumbai e-way in Rajasthan's Dausa early Wednesday, triggering a fire that engulfed both vehicles. **P 6**

Tech campus creche horror: Crying tots 'put in washing machine, loo'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: For parents who leave their toddlers at day care while they work, the videos are chilling. Five nannies at a day care centre on the premises of tech company, Capgemini, in Brookefield have been booked for allegedly subjecting children to inhuman treatment, including locking them in bathrooms, putting them inside a front-loading washing machine and spraying water into their mouths with a toilet jet.

The complaint was filed by a child helpline official, who received four videos of the alleged ill-treatment. According to police sources, the video was recorded by a staffer, whose friend had been fired from her job at the same centre last month.

HAL police registered the case against Manjula, Vijayalakshmi, Bhavani, Sindhu and Bindu under the Juvenile Justice Act and Section 351(act with criminal intimidation) of BNS.

Reacting to the incident, the company in a statement said, "Capgemini's foremost priority is the health, safety and well-being of its employees and their family members. We are cooperating fully with the relevant authorities and assisting them in their efforts to establish the facts. As a precautionary measure, we are temporarily closing the Bengaluru campus day care facility."

▶ **Threatened toddlers, P2**

5 NANNIES BOOKED; CO SHUTS FACILITY

- **City cops book five nannies** working in a **day care centre on Capgemini campus in Brookefield** for allegedly subjecting children to inhuman treatment
- Videos show the nannies **locking kids in bathrooms, putting them inside a washing machine** and spraying water into their mouths using a toilet spray jet
- **Cops say the nannies threatened** the toddlers aged 2-3 years **when they cried**. Officials inspect the centre and collect CCTV footage
- **Capgemini announces it is temporarily closing the day care facility** and the firm is cooperating with relevant authorities to establish the facts

Trump hits $1.4bn crypto jackpot, with help from Pak

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: US President Donald Trump's latest mandatory financial disclosure has confirmed what was once almost unimaginable — he has become one of the world's biggest political beneficiaries of the cryptocurrency boom, with new businesses tied to digital assets — some of it linked to Pakistan — generating more revenue than much of the real estate empire that first made him famous.

A 927-page disclosure filed with the US Office of Govt Ethics shows Trump earned at least $2bn in revenue during 2025, including an estimated $1.4bn from cryptocurrency ventures controlled by trusts benefiting him. The windfall has triggered fresh debate in Washington over potential conflict of interest while also opening a geopolitical chapter involving Pakistan that could adversely impact India.

PTI

About $800m is attributed to Trump's interest in World Liberty Financial, co-founded by him and managed by his sons, Donald Jr (2nd from left) and Eric

▶ **Reset with Pakistan, P 14**

French toast of WC as Mbappe chases Messi

As Kylian Mbappe trudged off to the touchline with substitute Jean-Philippe Mateta clapping as he waited, France manager Didier Deschamps received his No. 10 with a hero's salute, **writes Nilesh Bhattacharya**. By then, the New Jersey stadium and the entire world was witness to how a game of football could explode when infused with a sense of freedom and joie-de-vivre.

Result? A 3-0 free-wheeling demolition of Sweden by France, one brimming with a rare mix of menace and glee as Les Bleus became the first team to score three or more goals in five straight WC matches. Along the way, Mbappe took his tally of WC goals to 18 in as many matches, hot on the heels of Argentina superstar Lionel Messi, who's on 19. The race between the emperor and heir apparent for the Golden Boot has lit up this World Cup.

Getty Images

WAY AHEAD OF THE FIELD

▶ **The French are here, P 15**

Japanese PM Sanae Takaichi begins three-day India visit

Modi, Takaichi To Review Partnership

New Delhi: Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi arrived in New Delhi Wednesday evening, kicking off a three-day official visit to participate in the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit.

"A very warm welcome to Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi of Japan who arrives in New Delhi on an Official Visit. PM Takaichi was received by MoS Dr Jitendra Singh. The visit marks an important step in taking forward the Special Strategic and Global Partnership between India and Japan," the MEA posted while welcoming the visiting leader.

Earlier in the day, Japan's ambassador to India Ono Keiichi stated that Takaichi's visit will be a "great opportunity" for both sides to advance people-to-people exchanges.

Ono Keiichi made the remarks during the Japan Session of the Human Resource Mobility Forum hosted by the ministry of external affairs (MEA).

"Pleased to speak at the Japan Session of the Human Resource Mobility Forum, hosted by MEA India. PM Takaichi's visit will be a great opportunity to advance people-to-people exchanges, the cornerstone for strengthening our deep and strategic ties," the Japanese envoy posted on X. Emerging pathways for collaboration between India and Japan were highlighted during the Human Resource Mobility Forum, according to the MEA.

IANS

HIGH-LEVEL ARRIVAL: Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi arrives for an official visit to India, in New Delhi on Wednesday

Prior to her departure, Takaichi highlighted the importance of Japan's collaboration with India amid the current international situation.

"Through this visit, I hope to advance concrete cooperation with Prime Minister Modi in three key areas: Deepening the Japan-India strategic partnership in light of the current international situation; promoting cooperation in economic security; and strengthening collaboration between businesses of our two countries in investment and innovation," Takaichi told reporters in Tokyo on Wednesday.

"On the occasion of this visit, the Japan-India Joint Economic Forum will be held with the participation of representatives from more than 150 Japanese companies and business organisations. Working together with the private sector, I hope to broaden the scope of Japan-India cooperation and realise a strong economy," she added. IANS

Air Marshal Dixit takes over as IAF vice-chief

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New Delhi: Air Marshal **Ashutosh Dixit**, who served as chief of Integrated Defence Staff during Operation Sindoor, took charge as vice chief of Air Staff in IAF Wednesday, succeeding Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor. Air Marshal Kapoor superannuated Tuesday after nearly four decades of service in IAF.

As chief of Integrated Defence Staff since May 1, 2025, Air Marshal Dixit played a key role in strengthening tri-service integration and advancing India's joint military capabilities. In a post on X, Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS) said, "...Throughout his illustrious journey in uniform, Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit epitomised strategic foresight, operational brilliance and inspirational leadership." The Air Marshal was commissioned into the fighter stream of IAF on Dec 6, 1986.

Army chief unveils 'VIJAY' vision, says 'JAI se VIJAY'

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New Delhi: New Army chief General Dhiraj Seth Wednesday unveiled 'VIJAY' — his vision for building a future-ready force — saying it stands with PM Narendra Modi's vision of 'JAI' — jointness, atmanirbharta and innovation. Gen Seth said his aim would be to build a technology-enabled, future-ready army, capable of operating effectively across multiple domains, and his guiding motto will be "JAI se VIJAY".

IANS

ALL IN THE FAMILY: Chief of the Army Staff General Dhiraj Seth salutes his father Lt Gen Seth (Retd) in New Delhi on Wednesday

After receiving the guard of honour as Army chief on the lawns of South Block, Gen Seth saluted his father Lt Gen K M Seth, who retired as Army's adjutant general in 1997 and subsequently served as governor of Chhattisgarh, MP and Tripura. The moment became even more emotional when Gen Seth, father of two daughters, exchanged a salute and warm handshake with his younger brother Rear Admiral in Indian Navy Ravnish Seth. One family, three uniforms and a legacy of service to the nation.

Eggs, mud thrown at Mahua

Tamaghna Banerjee & Ashis Poddar | TNN

Kolkata: Eggs were allegedly thrown at Mahua Moitra and the TMC MP was effectively held hostage for nearly four hours by suspected BJP supporters inside a party office in Nadia's Kaliganj. The Krishnanagar lawmaker claimed cops stood by despite repeated pleas for help.

Moitra shared multiple videos, showing protesters hurling eggs, mud and stones through windows, with one egg hitting her, before she was eventually escorted out by police. "This was unchecked BJP mob violence for over 4 hrs aided by police inside our MLA office... The numbers grew as police watched silently for 4 hours," Moitra posted. TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee condemned the attack, questioning the role of police.

TN cops arrest 3 for trying to poach at least 15 MLAs

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Chennai: Tamil Nadu Police on Wednesday arrested three men and detained four others on charges of trying to buy over at least 15 TVK MLAs to vote against a planned no-confidence motion against assembly speaker J C D Prabhakar.

Horse-trading allegations flew thick and fast on Wednesday as the governing TVK and opposition DMK accused each other of trying to poach their MLAs. While TVK said former DMK minister V Senthilbalaji was trying to topple the TVK govt, DMK complained to governor R V Arlekar and DVAC that chief minister C Joseph Vijay and MDMK leader Vaiko conspired to poach two DMK MLAs.

TVK Uthangarai MLA N Ilayaraja said a Chennai resident called Thirunavukkarasu promised him ₹35 crore to vote against the assembly speaker during a planned no-confidence motion. Police arrested Thirunavukkarasu and two others — Naresh from Trichy and Thiagarajan from Chennai — on charges of inducement. Police had detained four more men for allegedly plotting to poach at least 15 TVK legislators.

Police said Thirunavukkarasu met the TVK MLA on behalf of Senthilbalaji and his brother V Ashok Kumar, and warned the MLA and his family against telling anyone about the "negotiation". Another accused, Naresh, had met Senthilbalaji's brother in Chennai, a police statement said.

Electricity minister R Nirmakumar attacked DMK. "Why are Stalin and Udhayanidhi Stalin so desperate to topple the TVK govt," he asked. DMK organising secretary R S Bharathi submitted a complaint to the governor accusing Vijay of attempting to induce two DMK MLAs (MDMK men who contested on DMK's symbol) to resign.

Top court: No default bail if chargesheet filed on time

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New Delhi: Supreme Court on Wednesday held that an accused person cannot claim default bail on the ground that the chargesheet, which was filed in court within the statutory period, was not provided to him as per that timeline.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and N K Singh said, "We are of the view that simple non-filing of additional copies of the chargesheet/police report will not entitle the appellant to the relief of default bail. This Court, while considering default bail under the erstwhile CrPC, has expounded that the relief of default bail is limited to non-filing of the chargesheet itself and once the chargesheet is filed in its proper form, the question of default bail does not arise," bench said.

The court rejected the plea of an accused person facing prosecution for online fraud. He was arrested by CBI on July 13 last year, and the prosecution filed a chargesheet against him and other accused on Sept 2. A copy of chargesheet was provided to appellant on Sept 23.

Section of Aravali hillock flattened

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TOI

RAZED: The cleared area measures around an acre

Gurgaon: A section of an Aravali hillock has been flattened in Mangar, one of the most ecologically sensitive zones of the ranges and home to the eponymous Mangar Bani grove.

Local residents reported activities at the hillock around 7pm on Tuesday and alerted police, who found an earthmover abandoned at the site. No FIR has been filed so far.

The forest dept also inspected the area. "It looks like some part of the hill was damaged. We are investigating," said Jhalkar Uyake, Faridabad divisional forest officer. Fresh earth cuts were visible on Wednesday along the edges of the cleared patch, with the natural hill slope rising immediately behind it. A damaged mesh fence was also found at the site.

The land is classified in revenue records as 'magda' — rainfed agricultural land — even though it is partly hilly. According to environmentalist S S Oberoi, repeated attempts have been made to alter the natural landscape here — trees and shrubs have been cut in the past before this attempt to level it with an earthmover.

Construction and mining have done large-scale damage to the Aravalis. In Rajasthan, entire tracts of the hills have been flattened. In south Haryana districts like Gurgaon, Faridabad and Nuh, hills continue to sustain damage.

JU allots rooms to 3 RSS-BJP linked units

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Kolkata: Jadavpur University allotted rooms to three organisations linked to RSS and BJP, marking a growing footprint for the saffron camp in an institution long seen as a bastion of the Left.

Among the three, two staff organisations and the other is a teachers' body. A university official said, "As per the vice-chancellor's order, the rooms have been allotted to the three organisations. They wrote to university authorities to allot them office rooms to run their organisations."

Maha bill seeks official status for women ryots

Mumbai: The legislative assembly on Wednesday proposed the Maharashtra Women Farmers Empowerment Bill, 2026, seeking to formally recognise women engaged in agriculture as farmers and provide them with official 'woman farmer certificates,' a move expected to improve their access to govt welfare schemes, institutional credit and other agriculture-related benefits, **reports Chittaranjan Tembhekar**.

The bill acknowledges the growing role of women in agriculture and aims to address the issue of their lack of formal recognition despite substantial participation in farming activities. It also proposes creation of a women farmers' database, a Maharashtra State Fund for Women Farmers, a women farmers empowerment cell, a women farmers empowerment council, and a state monitoring committee to support implementation.